My Quaker Maid

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—BY—

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MY QUAKER MAID

CHAPTER I.

Gallop! gallop! gallop! rode two men in the spring-time of their lives, and the spring of the year as it smiles on Northern Maryland. All the sweet odors of the new-turned soil, and the fragrance of the first orchards, swept past them, and the pink petals of peach trees made rosy spots near and far through the clearings.

But neither of the gentlemen riders, nor the slender colored boy with a portmanteau pegging along in their rear, gave aught of heed to the road-side beauties. Occasionally one or the other would glance back over shoulder when some eminence was reached, but their speed was only checked where a hamlet was passed; a field where curious farmers rested on their plow handles to stare at the unusual strangers traveling along the back road; for a bit unusual they certainly appeared to the rural eye, despite the red clay of the country on man and beast.

Their horses were magnificent animals—to be given notice for their breeding anywhere, and their equipment was in keeping; while the fine gray coats of their riders could not all conceal the costume of men of fashion in the fifties.

"We had been less noticed to have kept to the turnpike where travelers pass hourly," grumbled the taller and more handsome man of the two. "How much farther does this devilish trail lead us into the wilderness?"

"Less than five miles to the State line, and comparative safety."

"Safety? You mean breathing time!" retorted the other. "And this filly of mine— Oh! curse the luck!"

For in crossing a stretch of corduroy road at the edge of a marshy stream she broke through one of the half-rotted logs, stumbled, and came to a stand —her foot fast.

The rider and the much frightened black boy were on the ground in an instant, carefully extricating the prisoned member, the rider patting her sides affectionately with a hand on which a bandage had slipped down from the wrist, stained slightly with blood, as from some late injury.

"Good girl—good girl!" he said, as he led her along the edge of the treacherous road, watching her carefully as she lifted the hurt foot. At the border of the little stream he halted, leaned on the saddle and stared across at his friend on the other side.

"It's no use, Rob," he said, briefly. "She's gone lame; I'll not run her another mile—sheriff or no sheriff!"

The other struck his fist into his palm with a smothered imprecation and slid from his saddle.

"Take mine; I will be a lighter weight for her, and we can make it."

"No; she can't make the pace—it's no use trying! We've got to separate. You post me where to wait on the other side of the line for you. I don't know a rod of your Yankee land outside of cities. Where is the plantation of your Quaker friend, the horse breeder?"

He was still rubbing the animal's foreleg ruefully, and the tone of anxiety appeared as much for the hurt as for his own safety.

"Three miles the other side of the line," said the young fellow called Rob. "He bred this colt of mine and will know it on sight. You take it—give him my name and he'll be pleased to entertain you until my arrival. I must go home first, but I'll join you at Marquand's to-night."

"Have you really people in your North who will entertain travelers without further introduction than that? I should prefer a tavern to any private hospitality; it is difficult to accept courtesies and avoid answering ordinary questions."

"Never trouble yourself about that," remarked his friend, with a curious smile. "If all tales are true, Friend Noah is accustomed to entertaining guests who prefer the same reticence. And you will see a prettier girl on that plantation than to be met at any tavern stand. Pretty! There's only one girl in the old Quaker State to compare with her for charm—and I'm not giving you her address! But Jack Marquand would take the shine off most of your fine quality ladies of Baltimore."

"Jack?"

"Jack is the Quaker maid you'll want to win when you see her; her real name is Jaqcynthia."

"A Quaker maid for me? No, thank you!" he growled, and Rob laughed.

"Has your latest duel made you a temporary cynic to the sex?" he demanded; but his friend only frowned, and ignored the question.

"What is the man's name?" he asked, as he swung into the saddle.

"Marquand—Noah Marquand."

"That's not a Quaker name—it's French."

"Happens to be both," retorted his friend. "What's in a name, anyway? You'd ride as well and shoot as straight, Mr. Jenkens, if you were called Jones."

"Keep your doubtful pleasantries for someone in the humor for them," suggested Mr. Jenkens, scowlingly. Then, as he gathered up the reins, a frightened cry from his servant caused him to look ahead where a horseman had just dashed from a side lane into the road, and checked his animal, facing them.

Mr. Jenkens whistled softly, dropped the reins again, and pulled his coat sleeve lower over the stained bandage on his wrist.

"The game is up, Rob!" he said, with an airy gesture of finality. "That *was* an officer we sighted; he's taken some short cut and headed us off."

"Go back?"

"Fo' Gord's sake, Mahs Kirkley," begged the colored boy, who was ashen from fright, "don' yo' 'vise us to go back—*thah!*"

"Keep quiet, Nat!" said Mr. Jenkens. "There's no use turning back, Rob; he has left some one to guard the rear unless he's a fool—and he doesn't ride like one."

"What's to be done?"

The other drew a cigar from his pocket, and lit it before replying.

"I reckon it's a little game of bluff for you, Robin, my boy," he said, easily. "If you play it as well as you did on me our last evening at cards, you stand a chance to win. Come on. I've been longing for a smoke this hour past. The addition to our company will give us leisure for that, anyway."

"Gad!" muttered his friend, "is that your uppermost thought. I feel more like shooting his horse and making a run for it."

"Try diplomacy first," suggested Mr. Jenkens, who, if he felt anxiety, could conceal it better than his friend. They rode slowly on toward the waiting horseman, who eyed them keenly and held his nag with one strong, nervous hand; the other was at his side, hidden from them. Both men guessed that it held a pistol in good condition.

But, as they came closer, they were surprised to see that hidden right hand make a slow backward movement as though thrusting something in his pocket; and in response to their salutation he touched his hat in a half apologetic manner blended with chagrin.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, as they ranged alongside, "I reckon you wonder why I nearly

broke my own neck—to say nothing of my horse's—trying to head you off at this turn? I believe this is Mr. Robinson Kirkley of Kirkleysford, is it not?"

"That is my name," assented Mr. Kirkley; "and unless my memory is at fault, you are Mr. Kane, lately elected sheriff of our county across the line."

"Exactly! I've been over here in Maryland on a matter of business, and, coming back, thought I'd found some more work rather in my line. You'll be surprised to know I've been trying to run you down for the past ten miles!"

The colored boy smothered a groan; Mr. Kirkley looked astounded, and Mr. Jenkens mildly curious.

"An actual fact, gentlemen," asserted the sheriff, enjoying their surprise. "And when I tell you I was trying to ride you down because one of you was supposed to be a runaway white nigger, you'll understand just how cheap I feel over the affair."

The surprise of the two was so very decided, as they exchanged astounded glances, that the sheriff hastened to apologize.

"Not for any money would I have connected a member of your family with such an affair, Mr. Kirkley. But it is pretty well understood that the underground railway does have helpers somewhere near the line here, and we have to be always on the alert regarding strange travelers. You've been abroad for a spell, and can scarcely realize how much worse conditions are."

"But—when the man is a negro—" began Mr. Kirkley, with a puzzled frown.

"Oh! the description suggests a white man; he could easily pass for white in the North—is above average height, wore clothes of a gentleman planter, and the description fitted your friend so well I thought I had a sure thing of it when you left the pike for this back road where few strangers travel. And, by the Constitution, you rode a good race!"

"Yes—a bit of a wager," stated Mr. Kirkley. "But a lame horse spoiled it. Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Marshall Jenkens of Virginia."

The gentleman from Virginia courteously acknowledged the introduction and apologies; and, as warrant of his favor, offered an excellent Cuban cigar to Mr. Kane as the three continued their journey more leisurely toward the North.

When they reached the next crossroad, the sheriff was pleased to learn that he was to have the distinguished company of the Kirkleysford heir across to the turnpike, five miles away. Some day, if he followed the rule of his forefathers, Robinson Kirkley would be a political power in the county, and well worth cultivating by the seekers after office.

And Mr. Jenkens, whose business, unfortunately, called him in a different direction, parted from them with hand shakings, and evident reluctance; and, with only the nervous colored boy as companion, rode on his lonely way toward the State line.

CHAPTER II.

Hi! Betty Martin! Tiptoe! Tiptoe!
Hi! Betty Martin! Tiptoe fine!

The strumming of a guitar lent mellow accompaniment to the high, sweet, girlish voice of Dorothy Starr, as she danced down between the rows of budding daffodils and narcissus; and Jaqcynthia Marquand turned from a favorite rose tree she was pruning, to shake her head smilingly at the pretty visitor.

"I fear thee is possessed of a mischievous spirit this morning, Dorothy. Thee knows so well how Aunt Tabitha abhors those lilting airs."

"La! Friend Tabitha Morgan feels it her duty to abhor the sun in its course if it means gayety. Your father said I might visit you during his three days of absence. He knows I sing, he knows I dance, he knows I am all that is deplorably worldly, yet I'm invited! Do you fancy I mean to let you moon away the time during those three days? Well, I shan't! My father let me come before I'd been back from the city twenty-four hours, because he thinks your example will reflect divine grace upon me. But, Jack, dear, I've brought the guitar —I've brought the book of plays. We will sing, we will dance, and Friend Tabitha may go—pray!"

Noah Marquand's daughter surveyed her reckless visitor with amused eyes, and an adorable smile curving her rose of a mouth.

"Thy visit of a month to the city has sent thee back more worldly than ever, I fear," she remarked, ruefully. "But thy ungodly hat is wonderfully becoming."

Dorothy promptly kissed her, and drew off the disfiguring garden gloves from Jack's strong, slender hands.

"They should never labor, these wonderful hands of yours, Jack, dear," she insisted. "I always fancy how they would look flashing with rings. And a gown of satin—white is your color, Jack—and a rose back of your ear, and only a scarf of lace over your arms and shoulders. And music—not my tinkle, but real music for you to dance to—and, oh! Jack! Jack!—the right man to dance with!"

Dorothy's hopeless wail over the utter improbability of such a to-be-desired combination was almost tragical, and was broken in upon by Jaq-cynthia's laughter.

"They have put wonderful pictures in thy head there in Philadelphia," she agreed, as they reached the house. "But cast thy eyes about the room and observe how little this framework fits such pictures. We are simple folk, Dorothy, and like to remain so all our days."

Dorothy Starr obediently cast her blue eyes over the room they had entered.

It was magnificent in proportion; paneled in dark wood, and furnished in old mahogany of wonderful carving. Silken samplers, worked in conventional lilies of white and roses of pink,

framed scriptural texts, and broke the severity of the paneled walls.

On a mantel, beside stately silver candelabra, some beautiful sea shells of pink echoed the bright note given by spiky branches of peach blossoms in a glittering cut glass bowl on the center table; and daffodils, in a green boat of Chinese porcelain, glowed from the wide window sill.

Dorothy surveyed it all approvingly, and then her eyes turned again to the lithe, strong figure in straight gown of gray, and surplice waist with the tiny bands of white at throat and wrist.

"The frame is all very well," she said, finally. "If you went more into the world you would know it is a fit setting for a princess. Not a thing but silks should rustle here; yet you content yourself with a stuff gown and garden gloves!"

"Has the city given thee so much discontent that it is too heavy a burden to bear alone?" queried her hostess. "And must I take my share of it? The stuff dress is very good for the garden, and the gloves save the fingers from the thorns."

"But why work among the thorns? I tell you it is silken mitts you should wear, and satins to rustle when you walk."

Jack only laughed, and took a bunch of keys from the drawer of a cabinet.

"Here," she said, gayly, "are the keys of my worldly French grandmother. If silks can rest thy spirit, thee can find release from thy sorrows by viewing them as they dangle from their pegs."

Dorothy darted to the arm of her friend's chair, and perched there, laughing, and shaking her.

"I shall see them for three days draped from these shoulders," she declared. "I vow, Jack, none of the city belles could hold a candle to you if only you would show yourself. La! you should see their powder and perfumes, and poker-made curls! Oh! guess who was the belle of all the belles of the Assembly?—who but Peter Mintern's wife!"

"Our cousin, Susanne Marquand? But"—with a puzzled smile—"she is married!"

"I think she forgets it when she can." And Dorothy's shrug and smile brought a little frown to Jaqcynthia's straight brows. "Married? Of course she is! Only a married woman dare coquet as she does! All the dandies wait on a word from her. And no one remembers that her name ever was Susanne. It's Susette, if you please! Her dresses come from France, and she leads all the fashions. Yet—oh! you gray mouse, how you could make her forgotten if you only would accept her oft-repeated invitation and go visit her for a season!"

"My poor child!" and the dark eyes were plainly mocking now. "Has she sported a longer feather than that in thy own hat? Or has thee a cavalier who holds her fan too often?"

"La! She has done not a thing to me! But she is the gayest flirt who ever flaunted her conquests in Philadelphia. The women all wished her back in Baltimore. They say she has broken

up three engagements and laughs at it as a victory over younger, prettier girls. And even though she is a relation, you can't uphold her in that, Jack."

"I uphold her in nothing. I scarcely know her. Once she visited here—it was years ago. She is cousin to my father, but he never approved of her gay doings, or even of her marriage."

"La! She married well—lots of money, and a handsome fortune settled on her in her own right. Peter Mintern makes a doll of her—the dear, funny little man knows nothing of those broken engagements. Still, they say he does know enough to be jealous; they have terrific quarrels sometimes. If they were not so wealthy, society would call them scandalous."

"If thee has any further burden to unload regarding my father's cousin, it is as well to get it off thy mind before he returns," observed Jaqcynthia, with a trifle of scorn. "He would not relish the thought that the conduct of a woman of his family could be called scandalous."

"Temper becomes you, dear. I shan't say one more word of the naughtiness of Susanne, or even tell you of the fine Captain Gleason, of the British Navy, who entertains on a beautiful yacht, and who is her shadow, or of the gossip of the dashing Dick Cardiff, of Baltimore, who is her husband's kinsman; and who fights duels, wins at races, wins at cards, and—so it is whispered—is the one gallant Madame Susette has tried in vain to bring to her feet!"

"A great victory, had she succeeded!" was the scornful comment.

"La! Of course it would be! He is the hero of a dozen romances. Betty is wearing the willow for him, and they say he is handsome as a lover in a poem!"

"Oh! enough of such charms! Thee knows how I detest such blustering braggarts. Philadelphia quality folk have done thee little but harm—or so it seems to me. To gamble, to race, and to murder have become social amusements, have they? No wonder the head of poor Susanne has been turned. Has this fire-eating slave driver won thy fancy as well as poor Betty Harding's?"

"I've never had the luck to see him, but I should love to! Betty declares he dances like an angel."

"In what part of the Testament does Betty find record of dancing angels?" asked her hostess, ironically. "I've heard my father mention the name of Richard Cardiff. He knew this man's mother before she married the Marylander; and one of the late runaway slaves came from a plantation adjoining his—they caught the poor fellow with dogs at the river's edge."

Her eyes had lost their serene calm, and were lit with disdain. No Quaker meekness was now their portion.

"La! You must not blame Beau Cardiff for his neighbors' dogs," protested Dorothy. "He is too much beloved to be cruel himself."

"Beloved! Beau Cardiff!" repeated Noah Mar-

quand's daughter with contempt. "Beau! that means a dandy—a creature of curls and ruffles and perfumes! Too fine to do aught but twirl a cane and learn new dances. And for such a manikin girls go distracted!"

"His ears should be burning this morning if they have half the blaze of your eyes, Jack. You snub Abner Stornway, and all the other Quaker lads, as too meek for human nature; and you disdain the Honorable Richard Cardiff, whom you have never seen, simply because he—amuses himself. Now, truly, Jack, what must a man be to win your approval, and your 'yes'?"

"He must be—only a man!"

"Only!"

"He must be brave. He must do right as he sees it, and care nothing for worldly opinions. He must be strong to protect the weak, as my father is strong. He must—"

"Oh, I see. No man who is of the world will ever fill that list. Like your father, he must labor though weighed down by wealth; and while you prune, he must dig; and all must be Quaker gray. Pink is the color of love, Jack; can you not find room for one little strip of such tint along the gray margin?"

Jaqcynthia only veiled her eyes slightly and smiled at the fancy; smiled thoughtfully, as she rested a firm chin on her hand, and gazed out unseeing across the beds of springing green.

"Who knows?" she said, after a little. "It

may be a strip of crimson when it does come; the pale colors mean little to me."

"Oh! there is hope for you yet," laughed Dorothy. "You have more fire than Susanne when you are wakened—enough to wither to a shred the wrong man, or glorify forever the right one!"

"You are a crazy madcap," decided her friend, tolerantly.

"Of course I am! And crazy folk must be humored. Humor my fancy now, and let me have those keys of the presses and chests. We'll have such a junketing—a wild masquerade. I truly do need cheering up, Jack. The one man is coming home this week—is already in Washington on his way from Jamaica; and father read me a lecture a mile long about him. You must help me forget it as quickly as possible."

"That thy father will have to repeat it?"

"He'll get tired repeating it after a while; that is my one hope! He has not a thing against Rob Kirkley but that Rob is outside of father's limit of deplorable worldliness." And Dorothy sighed dismally.

"Poor neglected maid!—with only a dozen other strings to thy bow. Here are the keys; gather the toys necessary for consolation. I have some slight business to look after, and then I will be with thee again."

Dorothy made a saucy little pout at the word "business," and left the room, strumming the guitar and singing:

I'll hang my harp on a willow tree!
And off to the wars again!

that Friend Tabitha Morgan, who was housekeeper and aunt of Jack, might know what disturbing element had found entrance to their peace.

Jaqcynthia sauntered thoughtfully out into the garden, a little wrinkle of perplexity between her brows. Dorothy was always welcome, but at this particular time——

She caught sight of an elderly negro riding slowly out from the stables, and lifting the gray skirt, despised of Dorothy, she ran, fleet as a deer, through the gate and down the lane.

"Ezra! Ezra! Wait!" she called, as she ran. And the old man halted in wonder at her haste and evident stealthiness; for she was running with lowered head along the hedge.

"Oh! I am so glad thee has not gone," she gasped. "Dismount, Ezra; I must speak with thee, and it is as well even Aunt Tabitha knows nothing of the reason; she is always alert and anxious when father is away."

Ezra slid from the saddle and turned his horse deftly, close to the hedge.

"It is the old story, Ezra," she said, in a low voice. "Dorothy Starr is here, and I may not be able to attend to the strangers when they come. If so, the task will fall to thee, and it is better that thee go nowhere from the house until their arrival. Send one of the younger men on thy errand, and keep watch thyself. The strangers are not quite the ordinary sort; one looks like a gentleman, and the other may travel as his servant. With father

at home, it would be very simple. But Dorothy Starr would be curious over such an arrival. The need is great for extra care; spies have been watching each boat along the Delaware these late days."

Ezra nodded his comprehension of the situation.

"I meet them at either pike—if you know which?" he hazarded.

"But I do not know—not even if they come by boat or on horseback. Only that they come from Maryland; and together if possible; and that one of them could easily travel as a gentleman to quiet suspicion. On their arrival we can judge by their appearance what means will be best to adopt for their welfare. Thee must watch well to-night."

"I watch," agreed Ezra. "Mistress Tabitha not know?"

"We dare not trust her; she becomes too nervous when such things occur and father away. Her very anxiety to help would betray her to Dorothy. No one will be told but you."

Ezra nodded his head, though looking dubious, and the girl sped back along the hedges to the garden as Dorothy appeared in search of her—her arms full of gay stuffs from long ago voyages over seas, and a rope of corals dangling from her upraised hand.

"It is truly flying in the face of Providence, Jack, to keep such beauties hidden in old chests. Why were you given a seafaring uncle and a courtly great-grandmother, if not to deck yourself in their spoils? Aunt Tabitha says you were let play with

the corals as a child; but I mean to make you gay with them as a woman."

"Thee would have me called up before the elders for unseemly decking of the perishable body?" queried her hostess, with assumed alarm. "And I am to risk all that so that thee may have some one to deck as a doll of the world!"

Yet when the sun dropped down back of the western hills, and Dorothy's guitar sent softest melodies over the garden, it was no gray-garbed Quakeress who sat beside her and listened; but an enchanting figure in a white satin gown of two generations before. The treasured corals were festooned from white throat to belt, and one of the sea chest Roman scarfs draped over the dark hair.

"You look like a picture without a frame, Jack. Only much—much better! For one can reach out and touch your hand, and one knows that the red of your lips is not paint."

Jack tossed aside the decorative scarf with a shrug of petulance.

"I have no wish to be looked upon as a picture, or part of thy little stage plays. Why not take people as they are? The playhouses of the cities make thee wish to gild us all and frame us."

"Honest, Jack, would you not like to see a real play instead of reading it from a book?—or a real dance with a real gallant for a partner?"

"I—— The play might be very well for once, but——"

"But the dance you will not acknowledge yet.

Oh, Jack, Jack! And you were so surely made for dancing. Come!"

The guitar was tossed aside as she hummed a dancing air, and circled Jack with her arms, dragging her gayly into step, and whirling across the polished floor of the living room, overturning Aunt Tabitha's workbasket, only to be stopped midway in a mad gallop by an exclamation from that horrified lady in the doorway.

"This unseemliness of demeanor I have no time at present to reprove," she stated, in reply to Dorothy Starr's rather flustered explanation. "But Jaqcynthia has other duties than dancing. A traveler from a distance is waiting at the garden gate to see Noah concerning horses for himself and servant—one they have ridden has gone lame, and as the horses are thy care in the absence of thy father, thee had better see the man. He is waiting out there with Ezra."

"A traveler from a distance! And a *young* man!" whispered Dorothy, gleefully peering through the window to catch further glimpse of the stranger. "Oh, Jack! he is the answer to my prayer. Keep him for supper!"

The color won by the dance slowly receded from Jack's cheeks as she glanced from her aunt to the girl, as though measuring chances—and obstacles.

"Is he—is he a gentleman?" she asked, after a moment of indecision; and Dorothy nodded assent vigorously, and beckoned her to her own coign of

vantage; but Jack shook her head and moved toward the door.

"I shall speak with him concerning the horse," she said, quietly. "But if he wishes especially to see my father he must wait over for his return. If so, we will have a guest, Aunt Tabitha. Thee always welcomes a new one at the table."

"But—a young man—and thy father from home!"

"It has happened before. Since he seems a gentleman, if he needs to stop over we must, at least, ask him."

The little exchange of words had steadied her voice, fluttering a trifle at first—perhaps from the dance. It steadied her hand as she opened the door and passed along the garden path to the gate.

The thought of the stranger, and his probable business there, drove from her mind her own unusual attire, and she dragged the white satin of her grandmother, unnoticed and forgotten, over the white flagstones of the paving.

But not unnoticed by the stranger at the gate! His servant, watched dubiously by Ezra, looked nervous and frightened; the horses appeared fagged, and the master impatient. But at the swish of satin under the cedars he turned quickly, and the woman he saw there drove both impatience and weariness from his eyes. For an instant he stared—incredulous.

"*This* is never 'my Quaker maid'!" was the swift certainty touching his thoughts.

But the next instant, as he swept the pine needles

with his hat, and bowed low, and heard her words, he was undeceived.

"Thee has ridden from the South?" she asked, guardedly.

"Yes, madam; I——"

"It is not so wise to come by land; the risk is greater," she said, reprovingly. "I expected thee by nightfall. My father has been called away for three days, and left the charge of thee and thy companion in my hands. I have a guest who has seen thy arrival, and concealment is out of the question. It is best that thee enter the house as a visitor who waits my father's return for some business project. Only Ezra and myself will know who is entertained here; he will look after the animals—and this man, in case of pursuit."

"Oh-h! in case of pursuit," he repeated in automatic fashion, regarding her with questioning directness. "And in case of pursuit, what would happen if I were found here?"

"They will not find thee," she said, with a slight, reassuring smile, meeting his eyes for the first time, and a trifle confused by the intent regard bent upon her, which caused her also to remember at the same moment her unusual attire. "Ezra, thee knows what to do with the animals; cover their feet and lead them by the creek to the far pastures. Water is best to drown the scent for trailers," she added, casually, to the man beside her. "Please to come in."

"Fo' Gord's sake, Mahs Dick!" whispered the colored boy, imploringly.

For one instant the man hesitated and glanced at the frightened boy; then back over the road he had come, and then down at the wonderful girl who had expected him, who promised that no pursuers should find him—who smiled at him pitifully with the most wonderful eyes he had ever seen, and—who waited for him to walk beside her.

The last clause was the final temptation; and he walked through the gate with the reckless determination that one hour in Eden should be his, let half a county pursue.

"We can decide concerning the horses and thy journey when we have chance to speak alone," she remarked, as his feet kept pace with hers, slowly as possible. "If it is necessary to go on to-night we will arrange it after the others are asleep. But in the meantime I must introduce thee; and an assumed name and business were wise."

"You are a guardian angel to plan thus for my safety," he protested, keeping hidden, as best he could, the amazement her every sentence increased.

"I could truthfully say I am going north on—on a matter of personal business; that my horse has gone lame, and that I hope to buy another from your father. As to the name, if I am to assume one at your bidding, will you be so amiable as to suggest one?"

"*I?* Oh!" she began deprecatingly; and then two roguish eyes at a lattice put a wild thought in her mind with which to tempt the fates.

The colored boy had said "Master Dick." Why

not for once play a trick on Dorothy, who was so full of tricks for other people? "Master Dick"!

Why not Master Dick Cardiff—the beau, the dandy, the heart-breaker whom Dorothy longed to meet? It would be only for a few hours—and who would ever know? She glanced again at the handsome fellow beside her; he was really more than handsome—he had the subtle air of quality. It would certainly serve.

The fancy flashed like lightning through her brain as Dorothy nodded and grimaced, and patted her hands mischievously between the half-opened lattice. But that the stranger beside her was so occupied with his hostess, he must have seen that pantomime, and covered Jack with confusion. Dorothy should pay for it! Since she was so in love with tricks and play-acting scenes, she should have one!

"You come from the South," she said, thoughtfully, as they reached the steps—"from Maryland?"

"You guess rightly, madam." He stared at her in mute question.

"I know of but one name there likely to fit thy age and—and general appearance. It is a name outside of our world and will hurt no one if thee should use it for a day. It is that of the Honorable Richard Cardiff—he is the owner of a great plantation there toward the east. My aunt is coming—will the name answer?"

"Extremely well," assented the stranger, after an incredulous stare. "I chance to know the

plantation you mention, and will endeavor not to disgrace the name you have bestowed upon me."

Jack shrugged her shoulders slightly; she had little interest in guarding Beau Cardiff's name.

Her cheeks flushed slightly at the daring thing she was about to do. And the curious, intent gaze of the stranger, when she chanced to lift her eyes toward him, in no way lessened her color. How could she ever explain—should occasion arise—that she was using his misfortune for a trick on a mischievous girl?

A moment of fear touched her as she thought of what Noah Marquand would say at this use of the trust he had left to her; but it was too late to repent. Aunt Tabitha was coming slowly toward them along the veranda; and Dorothy, all ears and eyes behind the lattice, almost cried aloud in her astonishment as the very handsomest man she had ever seen bowed low before Aunt Tabitha Morgan, and was introduced as Mr. Richard Cardiff, of Maryland!

"Oh! oh! oh!" she gasped, dismally. "What luck! what luck! The greatest catch of the season, and here I am in this old lutestring dress, when I might as well have brought my silk of the rosebud pattern!"

CHAPTER III.

The colored boy followed Ezra reluctantly to the barns; looking back over his shoulder with troubled glances toward the two figures moving up the path from the cedars. He was clearly less at ease than the white man, and was also acutely conscious that Ezra was giving them both curiously critical observation.

"I reckon yo' all ain't touchen' ground enough for houn' dogs to trail after," observed Ezra, casually. "If so be, I'll look up another pair of shoes for yeh. My boy William's shoes jest about fit you."

"Houn' dogs— *good* Lord!" gasped the Marylander, stopping short, and eyeing Ezra with horror. "Yo' don't allow they'll trail me an' Mahs Dick with houn' dogs?"

"They certainly did with the last men who got ovah the line, though they got away all right," he added, as he noticed a gray pallor replacing the mahogany tint of the stranger's face. "Oh! yes, they got away all right. See that fringe of elder bushes on yon side the mill dam ovah thah? See where them topply ones touch the wateh? It was some cold then—frosty nights. But them men stood thah a whole day an' part o' the night, while the sheriff an' his men pranced around this place with them bloodhoun's, an' nevah got the scent once!"

"An'—an' yo' all say as how they got away, after all?"

"Yes, indeedy!—cut sticks fo' Yo'k State soon as we let 'em go. We hauled them twenty mile befo' we let them put foot to the groun'. One o' them boys nigh about smothered that time under the grain sacks we piled on top o' them."

"Good Lord!" gasped the other, in a dwindling whisper of terror, "I done warn him not to lay over. I done tole him we ought to keep a-moven'. Then that fine quality lady come a-bidden' him welcome—an' heah we *is!*"

"We easy keep yeh out o' sight, all right," said Erza, reassuringly, as he pushed some grain sacks from against a wall in the granary and lifted a board, showing a boxlike space between the beams. "This heah floor is double; so is the ice-house wall; an' Miss Jack will look aftah the othah man jest as safe!"

"I—I think I'd like mighty well to get to the house an' see the othah man—Mahs Dick," remarked the colored boy, hesitatingly. "I—I got his portmanteau in charge, an' he sure want that!"

"Penn can tote it in to him. Heah!—you Penn!"

A little darkey slid around the corner and reached for the portmanteau, but the Marylander was ahead of him.

"I don't dar let this go out of my sight till it's safe in Mahs Dick's hands," he insisted. "Yo' all go ahead an' show me the way. Mahs Dick ain't nevah used to fix for dinner 'thout me."

Ezra stared, and his mouth widened in a doubtful grin.

"Yo' is certainly slick," he observed. "But out heah at the barns is whah *yo'* need to be if trouble comes. Miss Jack tole me plain to look out for yo' all an' the hosses. How I gwine look after yeh an' yo' all in the big house?"

"Oh, I come back heah quick as I'm let," promised the other promptly. "Yo' Mistess Jack boss yo' all an' this heah place, but *I* got to take my orders from my Mahs Dick fo' the time bein'."

"Humph!" grunted Ezra, ironically. "Yo' suah is a high flyer, Mistah Man! But on this heah place you'll find Miss Jack bosses yo' an' yo' Mahs Dick, too! Yes, sah—both of yeh!"

The stranger made no reply; only motioned the little darky to show him the way. Ezra surveyed his retreating form quizzically.

"Yo' flies higher than any I've seen ride this pike fo' many a day," he repeated. "But yo' comes the same way, and yo' goes the same way. An' the sooner yeh learn the lan' mark, the better for yo' both. Nevah fixes fo' dinner 'thout help. Huh!"

* * * * * *

When the Honorable Richard Cardiff was ushered into a great, airy bedchamber facing the south, he found the colored boy waiting, gray with terror.

"Why, Nat!"

But Nat held up his hand warningly, and moved to the door, peering down the hall after the disappearing maid.

"Be keerful what yeh say, sah!" he whispered, fearfully. "We're in a tight place—a mighty sight wuss than yo' know. Every wall heah is double, an' every floor is twins. The sheriff raids it regular fo' some sort o' highwayman or robbers, an'—"

"You're crazy, Nat! This thing has turned your head."

"Turned my head! Good Lord! I've done heard enough in ten minutes to turn King Solomon's head—*I* have! How'd yo' like to be stood in a mill dam a day an' a night with only yo' head above watah—and it icy?—an' houn dogs prancen aroun' in plain sight a-hunten' yo' trail?—an' the sheriff—"

"What gibberish!"

"An' grain sacks piled on top o' yo'—full o' grain!—twenty miles in a wagon!" shrilled Nat, in terror. "An' that ole niggah says right out plain—an' a chucklen'!—that *yo* may be *my boss*, but his young Miss Jack boss us both till we get out o' heah."

' That's not so unlikely, either," remarked Mr. Cardiff, with a curious smile. But Nat was not to be reassured thus.

"I tell yo' solemn, Mahs Dick, we're in a tight place," he repeated, emphatically. "This heah house is—is a sure enough hiden' place fo' highway robbers and sich like; an' they've jest mistook us fo' some o' their gang! Good Lord! *I* felt shaky the minute that lady walked down thah so calm an' sweet, an' tells yo' she's been expecten' yo'.

Expecten' yo'! How she know yo' boun' fo' heah at all when yo' nevah know it yo' own self? She's a *waiten'* fo' yeh! Huh! Yo' certainly gwine to fin' it's bad luck a-waiten' fo yo' at that gate. I's dead scared that ole niggah ask me yo' name, an' he's boun' to."

"Tell him 'Richard Cardiff.' "

"Fo' Gord's sake, Mahs Dick! Yo' ain't nevah done took that risk! Not till yo' heah if—if yo' killed yo' man or not!"

"The risk is 'done took,' Nat," said the other, with a shrug. "We may have to make a run to get out of it; so hold yourself ready. But for a few hours, at least, I stop over as a guest of the Marquand family."

"Family!" groaned Nat, as he picked up the coat of the Honorable Richard Cardiff, and fell to brushing it with aggressive digs of the brush. "Family! The whole enduren' passel o' that family am jest one lady in a ghostly white dress. I wish to the good Lord Mahs Kirkley's hoss had tumbled him in a ditch afore he evah had a chance to go tellen' yeh ary word o' Quaker gal beauties along this heah road—an' yo' this minute in trouble a-plenty along o' ladies' doen's!"

"Nat!"

"I—I beg yo' pahden, Mahs Dick!" stammered Nat, as the eyes of the other flashed on him like blue lightning for an instant. "I's a plumb scared niggah—I is! I's scared enough while we was a-moven'; but I's dead scared now yo' stop in yo'

tracks, and tell folks yo' Dick Cardiff. They'll track yo' suah as death, Mahs Dick!—an' then what use maken' the run we made? If the worst does happen yo' taken' to the road gwine convict yo' suah. It's the worst break yo' evah did make, 'ceptin' only yo' stoppen' ovah heah without rhyme or reason!"

"Now that you've eased your mind, Nat, you might give some attention to the boots," remarked Mr. Cardiff, as he adjusted his cravat with scrupulous care. And Nat, with a helpless sigh of resignation, bent to the work.

No more words were exchanged between them; but when the maid came to announce tea, Nathan promptly repacked the portmanteau, preparatory to flight, and as he crossed the wide veranda on his way back to Ezra he stopped under the shadows of a honeysuckle vine and peered anxiously through a window where he heard voices and laughter.

The guests of Jaqcynthia were gathered about the tea table, and Mr. Cardiff was proving the most entertaining of gentlemen. Dorothy Starr was fairly bubbling over with delighted vivacity, and Aunt Tabitha was smiling sympathetically at some gay recital of his.

The young hostess was the only one of the group whose interest in the stranger had an alert, anxious tendency; in fact, her usual serenity had given way to a sort of tremulous uncertainty as the moments passed and she saw the others held by the charm of a manner new and strange to her experience.

His discourse was, in the main, directed to Aunt Tabitha and the ever-responsive Dorothy; yet ever and again his eyes would turn to Jaqcynthia in a penetrating glance of unspoken confidence, strangely disquieting to that usually serene person.

She was beginning to anxiously regret having entered upon this foolish escapade—the little trick of the name with which to cheat Dorothy for one little evening.

And how gayly he accepted the situation! How care-free and debonair his manner as he assumed the name and rank of the most dashing beau of two cities!

There were moments when she was forced into admiration of his tact as he avoided most skillfully all but general topics—far removed from his journey, its destination, and its delays.

But there were other moments, when he turned his eyes upon her in that quietly smiling way, that she felt a touch of fear, as though she had let herself be drawn into the outer circle of some whirlpool whose force or depth she could not gauge.

Nathan, under the shadow of the honeysuckle vine, shook his head distrustfully as he noted those glances of his master.

"Humph!—petticoats! I reckon that settles it," he muttered, as he slipped quietly down the steps. "I reckon the sheriff cotch us right heah if he's so minded! By the signs o' things we're planted right heah fo' a week."

"The signs o' things" did not escape the astute

Dorothy, as she by chance caught one of those strangely confidential, yet deferential, glances from Mr. Cardiff to Jaqcynthia. Elated as she would have been over the idea of Beau Cardiff at her own chariot wheels, yet her dream of a romance for Jack was uppermost in her mind—and she caught delightedly at the luck the fates had sent.

Yet she could not but wonder that her friend was so strangely unresponsive to the brilliancy of the stranger; not the silent unresponsiveness of Quakerish repose, but a silence palpitating with feeling, and tinged at times by faint flushes creeping upward from the white throat.

Dorothy observed that the flushes invariably followed those glances of Mr. Cardiff, and was jubilant that Jack, though she might maintain her strange reserve, could not at least feign indifference to the man she had stated her absolute disapproval of so few hours ago.

The early dusk had shown signs of settling over the levels, and Aunt Tabitha was lighting the candles on the tea table, when the sound of a galloping horse came nearer and nearer. Mr. Cardiff met Jaqcynthia's eyes with a slight, reassuring smile, as he arose quickly from the table.

"A runaway?" he asked, solicitously, and turned toward the window. But Dorothy, who was there first, uttered a little cry of surprised delight.

"It's Rob! Rob Kirkley! And his horse covered with foam! How he must have ridden! Is it a runaway? Yes—no——"

"The animal does look a trifle fractious," observed Mr. Cardiff. "Pardon me—I may be of assistance."

Jack rose slightly, but sank back into her chair. He had passed her before she could signify a remonstrance.

Robinson Kirkley! Was it not likely that he would know the real Cardiff? The fear of it turned her half sick with dread of the result of her own mad folly.

And while Dorothy expressed amaze and delight, while Aunt Tabitha ordered another cup and platter and a fresh brewing of tea, Jaqcynthia Marquand sat, rigid and wordless, waiting for the explosion.

But none came. Mr. Kirkley put out one hand impulsively as Mr. Cardiff approached, but the latter avoided it deftly and caught instead the restive horse by the head.

"Rob! you never set eyes on me before!" he said, quickly. "Here is the man for your nag. Prepare to hear me presented as Dick Cardiff."

"By the Lord Harry! you deserve to be caught!" muttered Kirkley between his teeth. "What the devil do you mean?"

"I scarcely know. You may help me discover. 'Sh-h! Here's the man!"

As Mr. Kirkley dismounted, he and Mr. Cardiff bowed ceremoniously, and the man from the stables led the dripping horse away as Dorothy ran down the veranda steps.

"Oh, Rob! Mr. Robinson Kirkley, I should say. We thought your horse was making you trouble;

was it? This is Mr. Cardiff, and we are glad to welcome you home again—wanderer!"

And she spread her skirts in an exaggerated courtesy, to which the new arrival responded with his best bow.

"My horse outdid himself because he carried me to see you," he said, smilingly. "He was well-nigh unmanageable, and Mr. Cardiff did me a service."

Through the window, Jack saw the two men salute each other as strangers and breathed a sigh of relief. The color had surged again into her cheeks when Rob Kirkley bent over her hand and assured Aunt Tabitha how pleased he was to be made welcome again to The Cedars.

"The fact is, I let my horse cover the ground with considerable haste to bring you a bit of rather unpleasant news," he said, as he accepted tea and cakes from Aunt Tabitha. "News connected with your Baltimore relative, Mrs. Peter Mintern."

"Susanne?" queried Jack, while Mr. Cardiff glanced over the edge of his tea cup with suddenly narrowing eyes at Mr. Kirkley.

The latter drew a folded paper, odorous of the press, from his pocket

"Yes," he said, "a rather sensational affair; attempted kidnaping of that fair lady at their plantation of Bayside, two nights ago. The village paper received an account of it by telegraph, and the sheriff's man was having offers of reward printed as I came past; by to-morrow morning every road crossing the State line will be decorated with offers

for the apprehension of a gentleman who has outridden the Maryland officers."

Aunt Tabitha, to whom he had given the paper, adjusted her glasses and uttered a cry of dismay.

"Perhaps it is murder! Jaqcynthia, does thee see this awful thing? It says the reward for the murderer is five hundred dollars!"

Mr. Cardiff replaced the pretty cup from which he had been drinking, carefully, beside his plate.

"The—murderer?" he said, while Dorothy jumped from her chair and circled the table the better to read over Tabitha's shoulder.

"Susanne—murdered!"

"No, no, Jack! It is a man who is shot—see!" And Dorothy held the paper, that all might read. "Peter Mintern offers five hundred dollars reward for the apprehension of the man who attempted the kidnaping of Mrs. Mintern, from their estate at Bayside, and who shot the gallant Captain Gleason, of the yacht *Rover*, who rescued the lady from the midnight marauder. Mrs. Mintern is too much prostrated by the shock to describe the miscreant, but it is hoped that the captain will soon recover sufficiently to do so."

"Kidnaped! And the gallant Gleason shot in her defense!" said Mr. Cardiff, in blank amaze. "Well —by all the—hem!—these seem perilous times when such daring villains are abroad! And—you mention that this lady is known to you—a relative?"

"Mrs. Susanne Mintern is a relative of my father," said Jack, with careful directness, as she recalled

the converse of Dorothy a few hours ago; and at the same moment that little maid also remembered that Richard Cardiff was by no means excluded from the family connection!

"How strange that you should only just discover that you are all related after a fashion, since you are a nephew—or is it a grandnephew?—of Peter Mintern! You—Why, you must know the man who was shot?"

Jack glanced at him in dismay—appalled at the horrible net she had spread for the feet of the stranger. How—how could he extricate himself?

But he returned her swift glance with a smile of reassurance.

"Yes; I have met him often. He has been visiting with other guests at Bayside for the past two weeks. I thought the party had broken up."

"This has made the most romantic ending possible for the season." And Dorothy sighed and grimaced. "What good fortune Mrs. Susanne does have!"

"Dorothy Starr! I am amazed that——"

"Yes—yes—I know, Friend Tabitha. You are more than amazed—you are scandalized, and ashamed of me. But after being the belle of an entire winter, to be kidnaped in the spring, what luck for a woman! It is enough to make her a belle for the rest of her life!"

"Are you willing to be kidnaped in order to perpetuate your own belleship indefinitely?" asked Rob Kirkley, aside. "And are you willing to forgive the man who does it?"

"It is unseemly to speak so of any man's wife!" insisted Tabitha, firmly. "I beg thee does not apply the term of 'belle' to Jack's cousin."

"Your—*cousin?*" And the eyes of Mr. Cardiff lingered wonderingly on Jack's perplexed face.

"Does that seem so improbable to you city quality folk?" demanded Dorothy. "Even we of the fields do attend an Assembly sometimes."

"Any assembly would be graced the more by your presence there," he said, with careless courtesy. "But—Mrs. Mintern does seem—a world apart from—you!"

The latter part of the speech was to Jack, and again that slight little flush arose to her face, and receded, leaving it a trifle paler.

Rob Kirkley looked up sharply at the man's tone, and then, glancing at Jack's face, he comprehended somewhat the cause of things otherwise puzzling.

"You say there is no description of the Bayside miscreant?" asked Mr. Cardiff, casually.

"None—as yet," returned Mr. Kirkley, politely. "But the offers of reward will circle the country—every stranger will be watched by the authorities."

"So if the man is in hiding he had better remain hidden," suggested Mr. Cardiff.

"On the contrary," and Rob Kirkley met the other's eyes squarely, "if he cares for his safety, I should say for him to ride as fast and as far as he could—and to ride ahead of those offers of reward, and not to risk passing one."

"One never knows," remarked Mr. Cardiff. "If

it is the fellow's lucky day he'll clear all fences and if it isn't he'll ride to lose, no matter when he starts."

"We should rather plan how the wretch could be caught—not how he should escape," remarked Tabitha, severely.

"I should think," said Dorothy, "that Susanne Mintern could give some sort of description of the man—and surely Captain Gleason could."

"The lady is prostrated, the gentleman wounded," reminded Rob, who was regarding Mr. Cardiff with sharp attention.

"Ah! and neither of them able to speak?" said that gentleman. "It certainly is a complicated case. If I thought I could be of assistance to the family by going down there, I wonder if I could ride it in a day?"

Rob Kirkley looked at him a moment before making reply. "I have known it to be made in eighteen hours," he said, coolly. "But it depends on your horseflesh, and how well you know the roads —especially the short cuts."

"Exactly!" assented Mr. Cardiff, thoughtfully. "And as I am not acquainted with the short cuts, the railway would be the better plan. Yet they will probably secure their man before I could reach the plantation to start on the trail."

"They probably will have done so," agreed Mr. Kirkley, politely. "And when Mrs. Mintern is able to describe the fellow his case will be settled, unless he gets out of the country at once. That reward will inspire lagging justice."

CHAPTER IV.

Jack listened, fascinated but silent, as those plans concerning that unknown fugitive were discussed around her. All her troubled thoughts were held by that other fugitive opposite her, smiling and apparently careless; yet she knew how greatly his escape might be hindered by that offer of reward.

If all roads were posted with those bills, what stranger would escape careful examination from the authorities? Her startled eyes, with that question in them, sought the stranger's, only to be met again by that grateful, reassuring smile so perplexing to her with its sense of dominating courage.

She was appalled at the situation made possible through her folly. Any instant some new complication might arise—something not to be smiled down by polite phrases.

And Robinson Kirkley—he would stay overnight, of course. Her father would invite him if he were there. It was only neighborly to invite him—eminently proper—now that a young stranger was a guest in their Adamless Eden. But the traditions of propriety of her most rigid grandmother would have been tossed aside by Jack Marquand that evening, if only the fates had allowed her to toss them. She would have preferred Rob a dozen miles away, and Dorothy and Tabitha safe in slumber.

Then, with Ezra and good horses to help, he should ride far beyond those offers of reward.

"Mr. Cardiff, do you indulge in anything so worldly as a cigar?" asked Rob, as Tabitha had gone to her room, and the young people had stepped out on the veranda. The moon was rising over the river hills, and the garden looked a dream of peace backed by the cedars. "Friend Jack never objects."

"In that case—" And Cardiff looked at Jack, inquiringly.

"Yes, we allow worldly pastimes to worldly folk," she said, with a little absent smile. "Dorothy carries here both her guitar and her play books."

"The guitar!—good!" decided Rob. "A guitar is exactly what is needed for an evening like this. If Friend Dorothy will look it up, while Mr. Cardiff and I take our cigars to the garden—"

His one thought was to separate Cardiff from the others by hook or crook, but he reckoned without Friend Dorothy's flirtatious tendencies.

"Mr. Cardiff can smoke at ease on the veranda, while you come and help me hunt the guitar and the plays. Aunt Tabitha may lock them up, and me with them, if I go unprotected."

Mr. Kirkley rose obediently. He perceived by the way Cardiff settled himself in a great oak seat on the veranda, after placing a chair for his hostess, that there was slight chance of getting him alone in the garden to listen to reason.

Yet the moment the two disappeared in search of the guitar, the stranger arose quickly, as Jack pushed back her chair and made an imperative gesture bringing him to her side.

"The garden may, after all, be a more enjoyable place for smoking," she remarked, with an attempt at indifferent tones. But her eyes as they were lifted to his were everything but indifferent—they were so charged with the command to follow her.

He cast a backward glance toward the living room, and saw two heads bent together over the guitar it was taking two to put in tune; then down to that wonderful figure in white, luminous against the blue-black shadows, her head poised in an alert, expectant way, enthralling to a man who saw in her what this stranger evidently saw, or thought he saw.

"My Quaker maid!" he murmured, softly, in half derision of his possessive term. "My wonderful, entrancing puzzle of a Quaker maid!"

He lit the cigar, and then held it at arm's length as he joined her.

"I only obey your order to smoke that I might come away from the others and be alone with you," he said, as he walked beside her. "If it is at all offensive—"

"No, no; it is a good excuse to be here. I thanked Rob Kirkley for speaking of it. I am so very anxious—and I wanted to speak with thee alone. If the sheriff should follow thy track, thee must know the hidden ways to safety, so that even the

other guests in the house will not know. At the worst, I might have to trust Dorothy and Rob, but my father never trusts any but the few who know. I noticed the injury to thy arm—is it serious enough to cripple thee in case trouble should come?"

"I think not. A bullet grazed it enough to burn a little and draw blood—little more." And he held it out for inspection. "I can still touch a trigger or hold a horse with the hand. If it had not been at the wrist, and the stained bandage slipped down when I arrived, you would never have known it was scratched."

"And they shot after thee!" she breathed with an indrawn sigh of horror. "Yet"—and her eyes turned on him with a wealth of sympathy in their depths—"yet it were better had they shot thee dead than to trail thee with the hounds and take thee back alive—a man like thee! How—how was the knowledge of the world gained by which thee has blinded the others to-night? Thee! so bound—so barred from books—so—" And she shook her head as though words were inadequate to express the density of his limitations.

"Oh, books have helped me a little," he ventured, lamely.

"But—thy master—he allowed it?"

"Allowed it! His manner of insisting was too emphatic to admit of argument!" declared the stranger. "Of course, I should rather have been riding, or gone fishing; but I had to keep my nose to the grindstone half the time at least."

"Ah! thee was trained differently from the others. Thy—thy appearance would warrant them in that," she said, gently. "No man like thee has ever come that road before. It seems marvelous to me—thy learning—and it would be equally so to my father. It were much better if he were here."

"Perhaps," assented the man beside her, but his eyes as they lingered on her face expressed doubts.

"Thy man will be taken care of by Ezra," she continued. "But this new trouble—this watching all roads for that terrible man—will make it difficult to get away. Yet—perhaps—thee should try after the others are asleep. Thee heard what Rob Kirkley said."

"Would you rather I should go now?" he asked, gently. "Does it trouble you so much that I am here? Say the word, and I will leave at once and ride either way."

"Either way!" And she turned startled eyes on him, and put out her hands in protest. "Thee means—"

"I mean back across the line if it saves you a moment's disquiet," he said, with terse directness. "For some reason I do not understand, I see that you are greatly troubled, and—I will go away."

"But—"

"I should never have stopped here," he broke in, impetuously. "If anyone but yourself had met me at that gate I should have secured another horse, and been miles ahead of handbills before this. Can't you—won't you understand?"

She stared at him in the strange half light under the cedars. He could not see whether it was wonder or fear in those wonderful eyes. But the moonlight was full on his own face, and there was no mistaking the gaze—ardent, tender—which he bent upon her.

She stepped back, her hand thrown out, as if to ward him off. Then it dropped to her side, and she leaned against the great cedar, still staring at him with wide, fascinated eyes.

"I know it is unpardonable in me," he burst out, nervously. "An hour—two hours—and I speak to you like this! But—a shot may end it all for me on the road I am going. I may never have a chance to say it again—never!"

"How—why does thee dare?"

"I will tell you why," he said, with almost rough decision. "I've had just one idea in my head since I heard your voice. And if this streak of ill luck goes by me I shall come back to tell you in a more sane, orthodox way the thing I am blundering over in this crazy fashion to-night. When you spoke to me at that gate I knew it was all up with me—all up. When you told me you were waiting for me—expecting me—I should have followed you, though it had been the gate of hell you held open."

"Thee has no right—" she began.

"No, no right!" But his eyes, with their steady directness, their strange smile, made her drop her own. "No right but that of the one man speaking to the one woman—and knowing her out of all the

world the moment his eyes met hers. I did not know even your name then, or you mine; but what difference did that make? I knew *you!* Don't shrink like that! I shan't say another word—and I shall ride away in the night."

Her face was turned farther away from him—shrouded in the shadows, her eyes still veiled by their white lids. No guess could he make of the expression there, when only the line of dark lashes was outlined against her white cheek.

"It is 'good-by,' my Quaker maid!" he said, gently. "Never mind the safe hiding places you would have found for me; I will take my chance in the open, my girl of all girls! Oh, can't you see it is worth having risked all I have risked to get here—and all I may risk if they catch me—just to see you as I have seen you—pitiful, tender, alarmed for me, the stranger at your gate? Just to dare say to you what I am saying now, and just to ride away with one wild hope for company—the hope and the determination to come back to you some day, somehow! Good-by!"

With a gesture as of one who, with an effort, casts aside irksome bonds, she stepped from the shadow of the tree, her head thrown back haughtily, every line of her figure expressing a protest too intense for words.

As he bowed before her, she flung out one hand imperiously toward the road; all the meek blood of the Quaker smothered beneath her indignation.

He turned away, absolutely obedient. Yet, as

she could see by the determination in his face, absolutely set in his certainty that he would come back some day, somehow—would dare to come back to her!

He had scarcely reached the central path of the garden when, out toward the barns, a sharp command rang out: "Halt, there!" Then a shot, and a shrill cry of protest from Ezra.

Jack saw figures rush across the barn toward the granary; and quick as light she sped along the path and caught Cardiff's arm in a grasp of terror.

"Come," she said, guardedly. "Stoop that they do not see thee from the lawn. It is the sheriff and his men. I may not save thy comrade, but I can thee!"

"No," he said, grimly, but closing his own hand over her clinging fingers. "No, I shall not bring blame or danger to you. If I have to go with them, that ends it. But if you attempt to conceal me and fail, your father would have every right to blame me for placing you in such a position. If they've got my man they'll know I'm here. Let me go."

"Thee shall *not* go!" She had drawn him around the shadowed corner of the veranda, away from the moon's radiance, and the view from the lawn by the barn. Dorothy and Kirkley could be heard rushing down the front steps. Shrill tones of colored men, shaking with fear, cut across the deeper tones of white men who were commanding and threatening.

"Thee shall not go! That sheriff shall *not* find thee here! If I let thee go out in their sight from this house now it will close for always this one gate of the underground railway for the slaves. My father would never forgive me—never! Why does thee stare like that? Oh, come, come!"

"The underground? The escape for runaway slaves?" he demanded, taking her hands in both his and forcing her to look up at him. "For God's sake! have you thought—"

"Yes, yes, yes!" she assented, tremulously, scarce heeding his wonder or his strange looks. "Come! No one shall tell! Rob will help if I must trust some one. Only come at once!"

He looked down at her, almost smiling now, and nodded assent.

"I told you there was no gate you would open that I would not enter," he said gently. "Show me the way."

She had opened a little door where an entry led to the pantry, and, taking his hand, led him through the darkness. There were turns to right and left. There were descending steps, and very narrow spaces in which to walk, then other steps to climb, until he heard a door slide back instead of swinging on hinges, and then he stood in an upper room, lit only by the moonlight—a bedroom, whose windows, and one glass door opened on the veranda.

"I opened this door," she said, pointing to an open space in the paneling in the wall back of them, "that thee might know each outlet. Here is a

candle; thee must have that to find the fastening of the locks. If they search this room, the pantry, or the living room, thee can overhear all that is said from this hidden corridor and guard thy movements accordingly. This room is my father's; and of all the men who have been hidden here thee is the first to be trusted with the secret of the openings."

"And why trust me, after—"

He looked at her with significant meaning, yet slightly smiling; even in the moonlight she could see that smile, and her eyes flashed resentment.

"Because even in thy folly thee is not a coward!" she said, with hard directness. "Thee has a white man's courage as thee has his outward semblance. The other men who come are frightened slaves whom we dare not trust, lest the secret be lashed out of them if caught. I can fancy thee killing thyself or thy pursuers, but never lashed into confessing."

"My Quaker maid!" he murmured low. But she heard him, and drew back the hand he tried to take in his.

"Here is the candle," she said, coldly. "Light it, that I may show thee the lock."

He did so obediently, and held it inside the open panel that no direct rays should touch the windows. Silently and swiftly she showed where the spring was hidden, and then stepped back and, without a word, closed the door in his face.

A moment she stood there, half faint with the sensations crowding upon her. The voices came

closer; she could hear Rob's in expostulation and Dorothy's in echo of it; and she knew as well as if she saw her Aunt Tabitha that at the first sound of danger that lady had hidden in her own room in the far wing of the house, and would only be of use if she was kept out of the way.

She stepped out on the veranda, and the group near the steps halted.

"Noah Marquand is from home," she said, clearly. "What is thy errand? There is no need here for firearms."

"There is need for law everywhere," returned a gruff voice. "I am a deputy sheriff trailing a runaway slave from Maryland. We lost track of him back a ways, but your black man is hiding some one and we mean to get our man."

"Why use powder when thee has thy dogs?" asked Jack, contemptuously.

"Because some sort of blind bluff has been used to throw them off the scent," said the officer, disgustedly. "They lost it three miles back; but we know this is the trail the man was heading for, and we don't mean to let up."

"You will speak more respectfully, at any rate," said Rob Kirkley. "If Miss Marquand tells you there is no slave hidden here you are bound to accept her word."

"Thank thee, Friend Rob," said Jack, quietly "but I have no idea of doing even so much as that. I forbid them to enter my father's door in his absence, that is all."

"I've a warrant to search any suspected building," said the man, doggedly.

"And shoot down our men if they don't open the doors?"

"It wasn't your man who was nipped," volunteered the man who held two immense bloodhounds at the steps. "And this one wouldn't have been touched if he had stopped when told to."

"A man has been really hurt?"

"Very slightly," said the deputy. "But he wasn't our man—not tall enough by two inches."

Jack thought of that other man standing listening behind the panels—of his height above the average. And her heart seemed to stop beating when the man with the dogs spoke.

"You offered share and share alike of the reward," he said, with blunt decision, to the deputy. "I'm out for my share, and I'm not waiting for anyone to take the lead. And here's my say: I saw a man, fully two inches taller than that nigger, standing with that girl in that room just before she stepped out on the porch. It was only for a second, and then the candle went out, and I couldn't see anything but her white dress. But the man was there —a tall man."

"Why, *that*——" began Dorothy; but Rob's hand closed on hers meaningly, and she was silenced, staring at him in wonder, and then at Jack, who stood, emotionless apparently as a white-draped statue, looking down on them.

"This is my father's bedchamber," she said,

quietly. "No one else uses it. You can see it is empty."

"Empty it may be now," conceded the man who was out for the reward. "But I saw a man there—too big a man to mistake. Ain't you going to make a search, Jim?"

"No, you're not," said Kirkley. "Miss Marquand forbids it."

"But the law is above Miss Marquand, maybe," retorted the man. "Why don't you give the word, Jim? You ain't to be choked off by any high and mighty airs of a pretty girl, are you?"

Kirkley turned angrily, but Dorothy caught his hand and Jack called to him. "Rob," she said, quietly, "what these men want to do thee must not interfere with. The rudeness is the affair of Noah Marquand when he returns. I will ask thee to take Dorothy at once to Aunt Tabitha's room—she needs thee. I will attend to the rest."

Rob looked at her with quick comprehension; she wanted Dorothy out of the way. A refugee was sacred under that roof. She would prove herself Noah Marquand's daughter.

"As you command," he said, simply. "Come, Dorothy."

"Now, Ike, you tackle the room you thought you saw the man in," said the deputy. And the next instant the men and dogs had mounted the stairs and filed past Jack into the silent, moonlit room.

The dogs sniffed about the floor in a desultory fashion, and showed their indifference to the chase.

"Strike a light, some one," said the fellow called Ike. "I did see a light here—just a flicker of a candle for just a moment. Now look at the lay of this room! No one could leave it but through the glass door to the porch or here into the hall. The hall doors were both open, moonlight showing clear through. No one could have crossed that hall without being in our range. Now, where did that man go?"

"Where did the candle go?" asked the deputy. "No sign of that, either."

Jack stood silent, while the bloodhounds ranged the room. Finally one of them stretched itself at her feet—a powerful brute, that caused her a shudder of horror at the thought of the man only separated from them by the paneling of oak, and what it would mean if he had to pit his strength against theirs.

The others soon vacated the room, where no slightest trace could be found of the fugitive. Ike, with the deputy, led one of the dogs to the living room, but met only disappointment.

"That girl upstairs knows more than she is telling —a lot more!" decided Ike. "There's a man here, whether anyone else in this house knows it or not. Chances are they don't. Look at that rig she's got on! Looks a lot like a Quaker dress, doesn't it? I tell you she is dressed for something special, and there's a *man* in it—a man in it! She was scared sick when we led the dogs past her into that room. I never took my eyes off her."

"Well," said the deputy, "them dogs are enough to scare most women—Quaker or any other sort."

"Shucks! She wasn't scared for herself—not for one minute. When one of them laid down beside her she didn't mind him any more than a kitten. It was for some one else she was afraid, Jim. I'm damned if I don't find out who it is! I'd ha' won the office of sheriff myself instead of Kane if it hadn't been for Marquand, and I owe him one for that. If his daughter isn't hiding a nigger in this house this minute she's hiding something worse—some man who prefers the bedrooms to the parlor—"

"Oh, you're away off!" said the deputy, impatiently. "Why, that girl——"

"That girl is as much of a woman as most girls," said the other, doggedly. "And the man she's, hiding——"

"Let up, can't you?" growled the deputy, opening and closing a closet door, and thus drowning the sound of a quick movement back of the panels. "How could a man be there without the others knowing? *I* thought I saw that girl in the white dress alone in the garden just about the time you say you saw her with the man in that room. And there's no sort of use in you trying to make me think she has a white sweetheart hidden there."

"Then it's a black one, that's all," said the other, doggedly. "You can take your choice as to which you think it is."

The two stepped out into the hall as a nervous hand flung open the hidden door in the pantry, and

Jack's stranger stood for a moment listening to the steps and voices sounding along the lower veranda and hall. The search had been given up, and the men were shuffling down the front steps.

"Where's the other dog?" asked the deputy, as they reached the lawn.

"Oh, it's still up in the room where the girl is," said one of the men. "Ike's gone after it. I guess he wants a chance to tackle her alone, anyway."

The words sounded clearly on the night, and were followed by an empty laugh from one of the men who, only by aid of the law, could ever have crossed the Marquand threshold.

The speech and the laugh came up to Jack, still sitting there alone, rigid, listening, yet heeding no word of theirs. But the words also carried to that side entrance where the refugee stood.

Swift as a grayhound, he mounted the back steps to the veranda. But once there, he took the wrong turn, and found himself on the opposite side of the corridor from the room where she sat.

But the other man reached there first, and his rough tones came to him as he crossed the hall.

"I just come back for that dog, miss," he said, insolently. "The deputy has called us off, and we have to give up. But I'm bound to tell you one fact: You may fool the rest, and you have; but you haven't fooled Ike Denny a little bit. *I* know that man is here. He may be black or he may be white, but he's *here*. Old Noah Marquand may fly high but——"

It was then that Jack shrank back against the wall with a low cry of terror—of protest, of supplication.

For a lithe, sinewy figure stood in the door facing her, and unseen by the baffled detective, who knew nothing of his proximity until he was seized by an arm certainly not disabled by the burn of the bullet he had mentioned. The man was lifted bodily, jerked through the open door to the veranda, and pitched recklessly over the railing almost on the heads of the group waiting below.

"Oh, nothing can save thee now—nothing, nothing!" moaned the girl, who had rushed forward, and then crouched against the veranda rail, staring at the confusion below and noting the deputy's quick rush for the stairs. "It is all over—over! Kill thyself—but never, never let them put hands on thee!"

A most strange smile of victory, yet of tenderness, touched his lip, and he rested his hand for an instant on her hair as she half knelt there. Then he stepped back as he saw Kirkley approaching, startled by the wild yell of the man thrown to the lawn.

But the suspect held up his hand for silence as the deputy rushed up the stairs and attempted to speak.

"I tossed your man down there because he insulted this lady by the same vile insinuation he made to you in the living room a few minutes ago. I know what it was—and you know. In future, try to find less brutal creatures to do your work, if the law allows them to speak to ladies."

"But *you?*" said the other. "Where did you come from? Who are you?"

"I came from a smoke in the garden a little while ago, and heard that man's remarks to you downstairs. I am Richard Cardiff of Baltimore. I refer you to Mr. Kirkley if you want further particulars. Come, Miss Marquand; there is no need to be alarmed. The man has only broken his arm, when it should have been his neck.

But Jack heard nothing of his last words. When Rob Kirkley and Dorothy rushed up the stairs she lay on the veranda in a dead faint—white as the satin in the antique wedding dress she wore.

CHAPTER V.

"By the Lord Harry! Won't you go now?" demanded Rob Kirkley, next morning, as he tramped the garden walk and glowered at Mr. Cardiff, who leaned back on a bench, smoking contentedly, and showing little but amusement at the impatience of his friend.

"Why should I, when the game is up? I have a good excuse now for staying over. Nat's leg was lamed by the deputy's bullet."

"Lamed! It's nothing more serious than a cut finger would be! You know he'd be only too glad to take to the road if you would let him. The poor devil is just about scared to death."

"Um!" assented Mr. Cardiff. "But he'll not die. And as for leaving, I can't do that until I see our hostess. Did you not hear Miss Tabitha beg me at breakfast to remain, for their safety's sake, until Friend Marquand's return?"

Rob halted, stared at him, and threw up his hands.

"And you mean to do it?"

"Why not? This is a pleasant corner of the world, and I tell you the game is up. That sheriff met me as Mr. Jenkens; the deputy as Mr. Cardiff. If they get together and compare notes—and they've no doubt done so ere this—what's the use in me wearing out horseflesh? I tell you the game

is up, Rob. And I see now I was a fool to leave the plantation as I did. It never occurred to me that the clever Susanne would turn the tables on me like this. You see, if they do find me, and I have to go back, I can go now with a clear conscience, and with no awkward feeling of chivalry to interfere in the matter."

"You forget; I *don't* see," contradicted Rob. "You have not told me a confounded thing about the matter but that you and another man had a shooting match, and that you lit out to keep from mixing up a woman in the case. I did not know the man's name or any other facts in the case until I struck the news in the village. Lord! Dick, you could have knocked me down with a feather!"

"Um! the facts." repeated Dick. "But I happen to have some facts up my own sleeve. From that printed account, Mrs. Mintern could not identify the man in the affair. Do you see what that means? She does not intend to do so, neither does Captain Gleason—in which they both show their good sense. It's our blessed Uncle Mintern, with his spasms of jealousy, who is back of the reward. You can wager all you own that Mrs. Susanne is not helping him any."

"I fail to see how that sort of a mixup with your granduncle's wife gives you license to establish yourself here as the guest of that wife's second cousin," blurted out Rob, hotly. "If Jack Marquand knew—"

"Easy—easy, now!" said Mr. Cardiff, softly.

"What's the use of having friends if they can't take you on trust occasionally? Don't worry, Rob; I'll get out of the mix-up—if I'm lucky."

"Lucky! But if the man should die?"

"Well, he fired the first shot. If the worst does happen, I should have to prove that much at least by the fair Susanne. Why won't your Dorothy let me see her?"

"Who?" asked Rob, with exaggerated denseness—"Your Aunt Susanne?"

"To the depths with Susanne! You know whom I mean. Can she be ill?"

"How do I know?" grumbled Rob. "Dorothy gives me no more information than she does you, but goes around looking wise and feeling important. Does Jack guess the truth?"

"Not within a hundred miles of it, I am happy to say." And Mr. Cardiff smiled oddly.

"Then I'm up a stump," confessed his friend. "When you were not to be seen, and she ordered me to clear out with Dorothy, I thought she had grasped the whole situation and meant to get you out of the sheriff's reach. Queer things are told of how people have seemingly dropped off the face of the earth when they reach Noah Marquand's boundaries, and I fancied she could have hidden you if she had been so disposed."

"Indeed!" remarked the other, with lukewarm interest. Rob stared at him sulkily for a bit, and then blurted out his impatience.

"Look here! I don't know what your little

game is; but you've got to count me in. If you can't trust me, you can't growl if I don't trust you —do you see? If you refuse to take to the road, you can count on me planting myself right alongside till I see what you mean to do. I'm in a devil of a fog as it is."

"Sorry!" murmured Mr. Cardiff.

"Sorry—the deuce! You're nothing of the kind. You're fairly jubilant over something this morning, though what the deuce it is *I* can't see. You look to me to be in a pretty bad muddle, if you only had sense enough to see it."

"Haven't an atom," confessed Mr. Cardiff. "I'm only waiting to greet our hostess, and after a little talk I may see my way out."

"You'd better find your way out before *she* finds out what started you on this trip," suggested Rob, darkly. "You gay blades across the line have mighty little knowledge of Quaker rules of living. Your name mixed up with their Cousin Susanne would land you in their perdition mighty quick."

"Oh, it isn't so badly mixed up." But for the first time a definite shadow settled on Mr. Cardiff's face, and he rose impatiently. "I wish to Heaven you'd quit your croaking," he growled. "You're bound to make things look their blackest."

"All right," said his friend. "But if they are anything less than inky you'd better confide in 'yours truly.'"

But Mr. Cardiff tossed aside his cigar and stalked down the garden path without deigning a reply.

Rob stared after him a full minute, and then, with a gesture of decision, he wheeled, and started for the stables.

"Where is Nat?" he asked, and that darky came tumbling joyfully out of the granary at sound of Kirkley's voice.

"Golly, but I *is* glad to see you, Mahs Kirkley!" he half whispered, after looking around carefully. "I've been a-waiten' fo' jest this chance, I has! Mahs Dick has me scared a'most crazy with all his doen's. Can't yo' all get him away from heah, an' out on the north end o' this road?"

"Not much use trying that," confessed Mr. Kirkley. "And all we can do is to try and help him out if they do catch him. So I'm going to ask you some plain questions, Nat. Did you see that shooting?"

"Nary a sight! But I heerd 'em both."

"You heard the two shots? Then what?"

"Well, then the lady screeched—no, she screeched first, before the shots—just before. That was aftah Mahs Dick had gone through the arbah."

"What arbor?"

"The arbah at the side of the garden—the side where them saddle horses was tied."

"Ah! Whose?"

"Mahs Dick ain't tellen' yeh about them?" asked Nat.

"No, he isn't. The chances are that he'll not until it's too late to be of use to his friends who want to help him. That's why I come to you."

"Well, honest Injun, Mahs Kirkley, *I* not knowen' a thing about the shooten'— an' that's a fact. Mahs Dick ain't a-tellen' me a word, an' I ain't a-asken' nothen'. He jest come back a-walken' sort o' brisk, an' mount his horse an' say, 'Nat,' he say, 'I'm fo' across the line, an' I ain't a-goin' to risk no steam cars; an' you'd better go back to town.' An' I say, 'Not unless yeh drive me back, Mahs Dick; yo' sure need me one side the line same as the other.' Then he callen' me some sort o' fool —not a-meanen' no harm by it—an' I said I could go along if my mare could keep up, an' she could. Then we runs into you at that tavern fo' breakfast, an' yo' says we're travelen' yo' road, an' yo' know all the rest 'cause yo' ride with us. Yes, sah; yo' seen all the rest only excepten' the most 'portant part."

"And what was that?"

"That's when the fine lady heah meets him at that gate, an' him not aimen' to stop only fo' hosses, an' right off she speaks to him kine an' soft, an' she says, says she: 'Light an' walk in!' An' in he walk, jest like a fly in a spider web. An' heah we is with our feet tangled good, an' me with two birdshot in my laig!"

"Hum-m!" Mr. Kirkley was giving little heed to the recital after they had left that arbor. "How did you happen to have the horses ready for the journey, and your master's portmanteau?"

"Ain't yo' hearen' 'bout his leetle fly around with Mahs Mintern?" asked Nat, in surprise. "No,

I reckon he ain't had chance to tell yo' all that. Well, that house party, a-breaken' up an' Mahs Dick aimen' to start fo' the city in the mornen'—everybody else done gone but him an' Captain Gleason. An' then that night somethen' happen to put Mahs Mintern in a rage with Mahs Dick. I heard their voices 'most 'leven o'clock—'cause I was talken' with Phebe under the library window, an' we thought everybody else gone to bed. An' then Mahs Dick walk out o' that doah good an' mad, an' I heah him say, 'Yo' wrong, Unc' Mintern—yo' dead wrong! But I'm goen' jest the same.' An' then he whistles fo' me, an' tells me we goen' to hit the road right then, an' to pack an' saddle. Well, I all done packed, so I broke fo' the stable. Mahs Dick nevah go back in the house at all—jest tramp the lane till I tell him things is ready. Then we gets into the saddles, an' heads fo' the east."

"The east?"

"Um," assented Nat. "We go two, three mile, when I happen to mention, kind o' careless, how Mahs Mintern's Steve ain't no ways fitten' to boss the stable, 'cause thah's two hosses still standen' in the stalls with the saddles nevah tooken' off yet—an' one o' them a side saddle, that *alles* has to be girthed tight; an' what yo' think he do when I jest made mention o' that?"

"Well, what?"

"Mahs Dick stop dead in his tracks. He sot thah thinken' a minute, an' then he says, 'Yo'

fool niggah, what yo' been a-drinken'? Thah wa'nt no ladies out a riden', so thah wa'nt no side saddles on.' But I p'intedly held to it that thah *was* a side saddle on the little black filly what makes such good time by spurts. Then he wheeled around an' nevah left the lope till we was in sight o' the Mintern house again. Lights was all out, an' he slowed up an' rode on the grass at side o' the lane as we come close. Then under the trees we sighted two hosses tied, an' no one with them. Mahs Dick cussed right wicked as he gets down an' han's me his bridle, an' stalks on right quiet toward the house. I ain't a-seein' him no mo' till I heah that squak o' the woman, an' then the two shots. An' aftah that we jest hits the road, an' keep a-comen'."

"And that is all you know?"

"Every Gord's blessed word! An' I wouldn't ha' been tellen' *that* 'cepten' fo' that sheriff shooten' me las' night. Some ways Mahs Dick bluff them off, but they'll come back—certain suah!—unless yo' all can get him to clear out o' heah on a double-quick. *That's* why I'm a-tellen' yo' all, in hopes yo' can—Fo' Gord's sake, who *dat?*"

A carriage was driving up the avenue of cedars; not a private conveyance, but a rather dingy-looking affair, such as was for hire at the railway station, ten miles across the country. A rather plump little lady, with a profusion of fluffy, light hair, lounged back on the cushions wearily, and turned her head to speak to the colored maid as the carriage wheeled into the lawn drive.

"If it ain't her own self, I'm a coon!" gasped Nat.

"Herself! What do you mean?"

"Mrs. Mintern—her own self! Good Lord! her a-folleren' Mahs Dick! If his Unc' Peter Mintern don't shoot him dead fo' certain this time, I'm a ghost!"

CHAPTER VI.

"He has asked three times to speak with you, Jack, and I am at my wits' end for further excuses."

Jack, lounging in her room, stared out across the garden and pretended not to hear.

"And to faint—just once in your life—is not such a terrible thing, lady mine. You need not be ashamed that he saw you; you never did look so handsome. To faint prettily is thought quite a fine lady trick these days."

"I am no fine lady," declared Jack, "and I want to know none of their tricks. What is it the man wants to say to me?"

"How can I tell what a handsome man wants to say to a pretty girl? But if any man threw another from the roof for *my* sake, I suppose he'd expect me to have something to say—at least, he'd expect me to be civil. Aunt Tabitha has asked him to stay until your father comes home, so you might as well see him first as last. He is talking with Rob in the garden—no, there he is on the varanda. Jack, won't you be civil?"

What Jack might have said to this last entreaty was driven away by a suppressed shriek from Dorothy.

"Jack, as sure as I'm a sinner, there's your kidnapped cousin, Susanne!"

Jack fairly reeled from the couch to the window.

All she could see was the carriage cover as it rolled along the avenue toward the entrance to the lawn.

"Thee is sure?" she gasped. "Go greet her for me; and—and tell him to come to me, at once, in the dining room."

"Friend Cardiff?" asked Dorothy, delighted.

"Mr. Cardiff—yes. Say nothing to her of his presence here—not yet. Go—go quickly!"

"At last I have my heart's desire," cried Dorothy, dancing toward the door. "I wanted you in the city, to beat her at her own game. But it is quite as well if she comes to the country, so long as the men are here."

She whisked out of the room, paused an instant to speak to Mr. Cardiff on the veranda, and then slackened her jubilant steps to a more stately gait —one befitting a mistress of ceremonies, about to welcome the belle and toast of a season.

Jack was leaning against the casement of the window, a great fear in her eyes, as Cardiff entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"You are willing to speak to me?"

"She has come—my Cousin Susanne!"

She looked quite as much like fainting as she had the evening on the veranda.

"It can no longer be hidden; she will tell them all."

"I think not," said Mr. Cardiff, quietly. "I did Mrs. Mintern a favor once—a trifle, yet she may remember. If you will be so good as to let me have a few words alone with her, I think—I am quite certain—she will be our—my friend."

"Thee dares to risk—that?"

"It is no more risk than to make a dash and take to the road—not so much, believe me. I could tell you why; I meant to tell you this morning. But they are coming, and there is no time. Only trust me a little longer."

She turned and looked at him, and again the quick flush touched her face, and only deepened as she tried to suppress it. Her anger at her own weakness was so intense that she felt she half hated the man for his daring—his smiling certainty that his plausible words could win whom he would to his cause. She felt as she had felt at the tea table last night, when he fascinated the others and left her a paling, flushing creature—half afraid, and wholly resentful.

Trust him after last night—after—

"It is no question of me trusting thee now," she said, coldly. "It is only a question of thy own safety; and it is for thee to decide. Thee can wait for my cousin in the parlor."

She moved toward the door, her head up and her face turned away. He should not fancy for one moment that she cared more for his safety than she did for the black man whom the deputy had hurt. Of course, she never had cared more—and yet—

She met Mrs. Susanne Mintern on the veranda steps, and greeted her with her usual quiet courtesy; while that lady—to Dorothy's extreme delight—stared in amazement at the slender figure in the gray Quaker dress.

"I vow, Cousin Jack, you have grown, at least!" she laughed. "Gracious! you are taller than I, and quite a woman! But *why* does Cousin Noah not find prettier things than this for you?" And she touched the sleeve of Jack's dress teasingly. "It makes you look like your own Aunt Tabitha for sedateness. Where is she? And where is Cousin Noah? I have instant need of him to help me with Peter Mintern. My nearest male relative is the one I need to quiet his fits this time."

"Fits?" giggled Dorothy, who was divided in her delight between Susanne's frankness and Jack's wonder at this latest advent from the world of fashion.

"Fits? Worse than that, my dear. This time they are convulsions! He was jealous enough in Philadelphia—you all saw it. But just guess what his latest craziness is. Unless I describe or name the wretch who shot Captain Gleason, he will separate from me! The truth is, Jack, he *has* separated from me—for the twentieth time in three years. But this time he is in a really frantic temper. Now do you guess," she added, as she sank down on a settee of the veranda, and flung her gloves and her scent bottle and her wrist bag beside her emphatically—"do you guess what has driven me here?"

"Driven thee?" faltered her cousin.

"Just that! If I went to the town house he would rave if I saw people—and I should die if I was in reach of them and could not see them! He would have my every step watched there until I

should feel haunted, he is so set on learning who that man is—as if I knew! But if he hears I have buried myself here in the country he will know I am deadly serious, and can't possibly be flirting. Then, in a week or two—with Cousin Noah to help persuade me—I may consent to forgive the Honorable Peter his uncalled-for cruelties."

She lifted a dot of a lace handkerchief to her eyes with her finger tips, sniffed a little, and then laughed gayly.

"Oh, it will work, Jack! Don't look so horrified. It will work beautifully. It's no trick to manage men, even your own husband, when you know how."

Dorothy laughed with her, but Jack regarded her with perplexity. Was this the woman he had just said would perhaps remember a favor once done her? How could this thistle-down of a creature remember any duty?

"I did not mean to look horrified," she said, quietly. "Will thee come within until a room is arranged for thee? In a few minutes I will come for thee,"

"How ceremonious!" laughed Susanne. "It is that Quaker gray makes such a demure mouse of you, Jack."

"Perhaps it is," said Jack, as she opened the door of the living room for her cousin. "Dorothy, I shall have need of thee."

Then the door closed on Mistress Mintern, and she cast a glance from the window to where

Mr. Kirkley lingered on the lawn. He was a good-looking young fellow—rather young, of course, but in a dreary exile of this sort any kind of a man was worth cultivating.

She crossed to the mirror over the mantel, flecked some dust from her hat, smoothed her hair with tender little pats, and gave a gurgling cry of terror at sight of a man's face over her shoulder.

He had risen from a seat by the chimney, and as he walked slowly toward her she retreated in white-faced terror.

"For Heaven's sake—*Dick!*" she exclaimed, and stood trembling. All her audacity, all her little coquettish airs were gone as she stood there swallowing, and half gasping for breath. "What—why in all the universe have *you* come *here?*"

"I might echo that question had I not just heard you explain on the veranda why you have come," he replied, grimly. "I stopped for a horse, but I'm going to stay until Mr. Marquand returns. So if you fear your husband trailing you to find a certain man, perhaps it would be as wise for your call here to be of the briefest."

"Oh-h-h!" A slight rising inflexion gave a tantalizing cadence to the prolonged vowel, as Mistress Mintern half closed her eyes and regarded him in a shrewd, significant way. "You are waiting for Noah Marquand, but you took care to come visiting when he was away. So this is why ordinary amusements could no longer interest you on the plantation—you wanted rarer game to stalk? A

Quakeress! Lord! Dick, this is the richest joke of the season! If only it were safe to tell of it!"

"Fortunately it may occur to you that it is not safe," remarked Mr. Cardiff. "I would suggest that you tell as little as you know of anything for some time to come."

"Are you threatening me?"

"Of course not. But I got out of your way once —took to the pike and rode like the devil just to get away—and I warn you I shan't do it again. I'm here first, Susanne, and I'm here to stay."

The door opened, and Jack looked from one to the other questioningly; their voices had reached her, but not the words. Mr. Cardiff was regarding Susanne with a peculiar expression—not at all that of a suppliant. And it took all of Mrs. Mintern's social training to gather her wits for the emergency.

"What a surprise to find Dick Cardiff here!' she remarked, as carelessly as might be. "You know, of course, his relationship to my husband? Quite a family party we will be. And your neighbor, Mr. Kirkley, whom I just met, is quite an acquisition. Even a Quaker farm can't be very dull with so many worldly folk here. Ready for me, Jack? I'm frightfully dusty."

Then Mr. Cardiff held open the door as she swept past, and Jack avoided his eyes and ignored his low bow as she followed.

Some way he had won Susanne to his cause; but, much as Jack might be amazed, she did not mean to betray the slightest interest as to how it had been accomplished.

CHAPTER VII.

How that day of Susanne's arrival passed, Jack Marquand could never recall clearly. The night and the morning had been filled with wonderful illuminated moments and startling shocks of feeling, under all of which she was forced to appear calm, unmoved—an unemotional Quakeress. Yet every fiber of her being throbbed hot with dread, with anger, and with a strange wonder at herself that the dominant idea of saving the man should intensify, instead of diminishing, after her knowledge of his plausible acting to everyone—even to herself in the garden.

She recalled what Dorothy had told her of the play-acting heroes of the theaters, of their counterfeiting the motions they did not feel, and her face flushed hotly as she recalled how, for one brief moment, his pretnese had appealed to her in an answering thrill so new, so strange, so wonderfully —dare she even to herself say?—wonderfully sweet.

She did not say it—she did not even dare think it. But that great radiance of the heart spoke for her, under all her outward self-control, under all her mocking impatience with herself, with him.

Could acting such as Dorothy told of cause a man's face to pale as his had paled in the moonlight when he had so boldly dared to claim her as the one woman? Yet had he not lied to everyone

else about almost everything, and carried so well the manners of truth that no one doubted—no one?

She herself was at times almost convinced as she listened to his easy evasions, and heard him put aside queries causing her own heart to stand still with dread lest by some forgotten thing he stand confounded before them all. Had his words to her in the garden been lies like the rest?

Many slaves—more than she could count—had come that trail in the last few years. Twice there had been women who looked entirely white; one had bright, blond hair, and a complexion of milk and roses, but she was a slave for all that, and fleeing from a dreaded master.

Jack remembered that her father had seemed very sorrowful over that case; it appeared that the more white blood the more sad was the situation. She told herself that this man, not only white but of unusual education, was, even though born in slavery, a man whom her father would have met as a man—one whom she had done no wrong in helping; yet—

Hedged in as she was from knowledge of the world, no discussions had ever reached her of that impassable color line between the races. Nothing had ever occurred in her life to make her think of it, until a wild primal emotion had throbbed for one instant through her heart in response to his avowal and appeal under the cedars.

And then! She knew her father's wide philosophy would have recognized in him a man and a

brother, but— She grew rigid with terror, and cowered from herself as she said, over and over, lest she forget it for an instant: "A slave! A slave! A slave!"

She was striving to bury all the Quakerish idea of the equality of man under the code of the more worldly creed, that the latter might serve as a safeguard against the subtle, mesmeric bonds he had flung about her in return for the freedom she was helping him to.

"Now do you wonder that they call him 'Beau Cardiff'?" demanded Dorothy, who was scorching her pretty fingers with a hot poker in the endeavor to arrange ringlets as irrisistible as Susanne's fluffy tresses. "Rob is fine; but he can't compare in quality airs with the Honorable Richard Cardiff. Look at Mrs. Mintern with him on the lawn. I heard she set her cap for him in Baltimore and failed. It does not look as if she is failing now."

Jack glanced where Dorothy pointed, and set her teeth grimly for an instant.

From a garden seat, Susanne was laughing up into Cardiff's face in a strangely tantalizing manner. He had just joined her, and stood a few paces off, leaning against a vine trellis and looking down at her with an unmistakable frown on the face Dorothy had declared so handsome. He held a slender switch in his hand, and threshed his riding boot with it impatiently. His manner had no longer the easy suavity heretofore distinguishing him even when compared with the elegant Kirkley.

His words were evidently not many, but his manner suggested anger, and Susanne's tantalizing laugh sounded clear as she leaned back on the garden seat and looked up at him. Then he tossed away the switch and turned toward the house, as if ending the conversation.

"Why can't you answer, Dick?" she called after him, and laughed again when he walked on without looking at her.

Then Rob Kirkley joined her, and they sauntered together into the garden, where Jack had pruned roses the day before. Could it be only a day ago? As she stared out on the green lawn it seemed many days and many nights had passed since then; at least, she had lived a long, long time.

That he had won Susanne to his cause, as he had won all else, was not so strange a thing, perhaps; but a dull anger flamed in her at sight of that strangely intimate attitude. The fact that he was angry with Mrs. Mintern only made it appear so much more strange.

All through the dinner at noon she had felt her blood tingle at Susanne's gay comradeship with him. His attitude had been above reproach to Peter Mintern's wife. Tabitha gave him more than one look of commendation for his careful courtesy to Mrs. Mintern, despite Susanne's careless appeal on all questions to "Dick" and to "Dick" again, The worldly ways acquired by their kinswoman were cause of wonder to Tabitha, and she was thankful that the only actual stranger at the table was Peter Mintern's nephew.

But during that one little meeting with her on the lawn he had not been distant in manner, or ceremonious. He had been most curt—even rude; and Dorothy, from the wisdom of her worldly experience, volunteered the information that only a woman in whom a man is interested has power to irritate him much. At which Jack grew at once remindful that Susanne was her kinswoman and guest; also that she was married.

Whereupon Dorothy put her tongue in her cheek and smiled, and then begged Jack to put on the white satin dress once more, that Susanne might see how handsome she looked. And then, her curls being to her liking, and Jack's scorn for white satin dresses being forcibly expressed, she fled from the wrath of it and joined the others at the tea table, where Tabitha was waiting for Jack. And while they waited, Dorothy began with renewed ardor the questions of the sensation at Bayside, from which subject Mrs. Mintern had once fled to the garden.

After a little hesitation, Jack went down and took her place at the table. She would have infinitely preferred doing without tea to meeting again the eyes of Susanne or Dick Cardiff, and be included in any silent compact with the two after that scene between them in the garden. Thus she was doubly thankful to Dorothy for some leading question of the kidnaping, requiring the attention of Susanne as she joined them.

"But the paper said you were prostrated by the

shock—not able to discuss the awful affair," said Dorothy, regarding Mrs. Mintern with much speculation. "How did you ever, ever pluck up courage for the journey?"

"Oh, the journey was not so long—only four hours on the cars from Baltimore. I was glad to get away in the hope of forgetting the subject, but it seems useless."

Her voice suggested that she was either wearied or bored, for Dorothy had already presented a long list of curious questions concerning the incident, and Rob Kirkley was not far behind. It gave him great pleasure to watch the two leading characters, especially Dick, affect indifference to the facts as related by Nat, and accept the newspaper history as corroborated by Mrs. Mintern, who was outwardly careless, but inwardly furious at Dick's slight little smile, when a question from Dorothy would at times make replies excessively awkward.

Not that Susanne had any objection to embellishing romances for the entertainment of her Quaker relatives, but this particular romance—and with Mr. Cardiff observing her with eyes half closed and smiling—was enough to test the temper and the wits of any daughter of Eve, however wise.

"But Susanne, if the moon shone and it was in the second quarter, it is strange thee could guess nothing of the man's size or age, or even color," remarked Tabitha, placidly. "It is not so strange that Peter insisted that thee should try."

"How could I tell when I fell in a faint?" asked Susanne.

"But his voice—not even that did tell thee anything?"

"Only to keep quiet."

"Maybe the man only wanted to rob the house?" suggested Dorothy.

"Captain Gleason thought not; because of the horses found saddled and other reasons. I've no opinion."

"Well, it's as soul-stirring as our adventure here last night," decided Dorothy. "Did you know the sheriff mistook Mr. Cardiff for a runaway white slave? Oh, we had exciting times for a few minutes. I have not gotten over the thrill of it yet."

"It was an awful thing to happen to a guest of ours," said Tabitha, severely. "I pray that it does not get abroad."

Jack's watchful eyes urned quickly to Susanne, but that lady was only mildly amused.

"You've been taken or wanted for a good many things in your time, Dick," she remarked, meaningly, "but that sort of a runaway is a new one. By the way," she added, as she noticed Jack's alert, questioning look, "what did bring you across the line? A pretty girl on this side? I should think your rent roll would insure to you victories enough at home."

"Oh, a man may have a hope of finding new territory where rent rolls do not count," he returned, glancing at Jack.

Susanne intercepted the glance and opened her eyes in annoyed comprehension; the thing she had taunted him with as a jest on finding him there, had perhaps real foundation; in fact, he was all eyes for the overgrown schoolgirl—he, Beau Cardiff, whom half the girls and matrons, too, had intrigued for. She shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"Never think it, Dick!" she said, easily. "Rent rolls always count. If you want to beat the other man's time (and there's always another man) you must have the most money. It's the deciding vote with even the most unsophisticated maid—isn't it, girls?"

Dorothy protested to the contrary, but Jack was busy serving spiced peaches, and cutting cake in disapproving silence. It was well enough for Susanne to remember a favor and help shield the man, but this converse in the very free, even intimate, manner was certainly uncalled for; and she ignored the appeal.

"I've a most heartfelt interest in having this thing decided," Kirkley insisted. "My governor sent me word that it was time for me to come home, settle down, and get married. I've obeyed part of the command, and if I manage the rest I'd like to know how I am to be sure if it's myself the girl marries or the governor's acres."

"Then do as Dick suggests—find a territory where no one knows you have a share of the acres. You'll get a girl, of course, but she's likely to be a kitchen maid. This is not the romantic age when high born

maids step down to the lad who has only a love song to offer."

"Must we accept your personal view for that of the sex?" queried Cardiff.

He appeared always to have the power to irritate her with the most casual of remarks, and she shot an exaggeratedly indifferent glance at him.

"Oh, you'll discover how many share the view if you really ever start the search with only a love song to sing; and if you want to be quite certain, Dick, you'd better travel on foot instead of horseback, and leave your servant behind. Then, with only your face for your fortune, we'll see what you bring back."

He regarded her with an amused, speculative stare, and then, after a moment, smiled and made her a mocking bow.

"I have to thank you for the suggestion, Mrs. Mintern. Some day I may let you know the result of such an experiment."

"Will you wager?" she demanded. "I'll put up any horse in the stable against your own."

"I never wager when there is a woman involved," he replied, carelessly; "and this woman, you know, is to be the woman of all women."

"For a month, perhaps," she said, shrugging her shoulders derisively. "Who ever knew you to be constant longer?"

In the laugh at Cardiff, Jack rose abruptly.

"I see Ezra on the lawn, Aunt Tabitha. I had best speak to him about the fences upon which they

should have begun work this morning. I—I was engaged then, but if thee will excuse me——"

She bent her head collectively to the others, and disappeared. Aunt Tabitha did not quite comprehend, for she looked questioningly over her spectacles in the direction she had gone.

"Oh, it's for me Jack would like to build fences, Aunt Tabitha," said Susanne, laughingly. "She thinks my speech of wagers and of love affairs indecorous. What—what shall you do to kill time if neither games nor the sentiments may be discussed? Is there any other thing left for women on a farm?"

"Jaqcynthia has her garden and her books and her needlework," remarked Aunt Tabitha, placidly. "She has never found time hang heavily, I hope."

"Not this last day and night, I promise you," declared Dorothy. "Why, I am just back from the city, and Jack's experiences last night would turn even me giddy—a big lot too giddy to remember farm fences."

"I know something of fences myself," observed Mr. Cardiff, rising. "I wonder if I could be of service to Miss Marquand?"

He heard Susanne's light ripple of laughter as he crossed the veranda.

"Trust Dick to always be able to be of service when there is a novelty in the case," she said. "But, of course, as a Southron, it is against his code of gallantry to let a girl cross alone even the dusk of her own garden."

But Dorothy remarked the little note of vexation in her laughing words, and was jubilant accordingly.

She had wanted Jack to win in the white dress, but if she was winning in spite of the Quaker gray, all the more of victory.

The slight message to Ezra was given, and Jack sauntered on down the walk—unconscious of quiet steps following her.

She had felt smothered in there by the weight of Susanne's jests and pretenses. Never before had she known what nerves meant, but now she was frantic to get away from the laughing group and out into the evening air, where she could draw deep, deep breaths, though ever conscious of a heartache that went deeper; where she could stretch her arms wide, as though to ward off the shadows closing over her head—shadows more dense than the shadows of the night, for above her shone a few of the early stars in the blue-gray vault, and in the dusk of her life there would be no star's light—not one!—not one!

All at once the realization of what it would mean to her—all of her life—came to her with overwhelming force. Life could never be the same—never!

It would be desolate. Yet never before had she even thought of what desolation absolute could mean. Why had it all come to her like this—in a day and a night? She had never, in any dreams of hers, pictured life with anyone she had met. Then why——all in a moment like this—should a sense of loneliness sweep over her until it left her shaken with

suppressed sobs there by the bench under the cedars? No longer a girl waiting for the future with its possible lover, but a woman grown old in a day, through a horror she must face and fight alone.

She had sunk down on the bed of pine needles heaped by the winds between the tree trunks and the garden seat.

The Quaker gray of subdued feelings had been set aside by the red blood of the Marquands. It was as she had said in jest only yesterday—when love's color came to her it might prove not the dainty pink glow of the poet's fancy, but the band of crimson—the badge of tragedy and rebellion.

The refugee halted there in the shadows for a moment as those sobs came to his ears, all the man in him longing to go forward, to lift her from the ground, to tell her.

But back of him he heard a door open, and Susanne's voice on the veranda; also Dorothy's guitar giving out soft harmonies.

"Where are you, Dick?" she called. "We are going to read plays. Bring Jack, and come in."

He stepped quickly into another path, and was thankful the moon had not yet risen. A few quick strides took him closer to the veranda.

"Very well!" he called back. "I'll be in when I finish a cigar. But I've not found Miss Marquand."

Jack heard the words from where she knelt, and they brought her to her feet in terror.

He had not found her—had he been sent to find

her? If so, by what chance of fortune had he avoided the place where they had stood last night?

She sped through an arbor—strong and alert now at the first note of danger, at the dread thought that he *might* have chanced near her, that he *might* think —oh! he must be made to think any earthly thing but—the truth!

Gone was the prostrate, wretched woman under the cedars, and in her stead a girl with flushed cheeks and nervous hands stood before a mirror and smoothed quickly her mass of dark hair—turned in the narrow band of a collar, and in its place folded a fichu of finest white silk mull, surplice fashion, across her bosom. In its folds one scarlet rose from a window jar echoed the scarlet of her lips, and a minute later she had sped down the stairs and entered the living room—a glowing picture with never a hint of life's shadows flung across it.

"Why, Jack!" breathed Dorothy, ecstatically. This was the Jack she wanted Cardiff and Mistress Mintern to see—this creature of form and color, not the gray mouse her cousin had called her numerous times during the day.

There was nothing of the gray mouse about her now; the gray of the dress was only the background for the wonderful face above the white kerchief, and the wonderful eyes, with the new, half appealing, half defiant expression, bewildering even Dorothy, who saw her suddenly from a new point of view.

For the first time Jack Marquand looked to her altogether proud; the pride gathered up because

for the first time in her life Jack Marquand had a hurt to hide, a humiliation to put under foot.

"Friend Cardiff went to seek thee, Jack," remarked Tabitha.

"I came from upstairs," answered Jack. "I brought thy knitting."

"I fear I shall leave all the work to thee to-night. Last night strange doings caused me to lose sleep, and this evening I leave the company to thy care," said Tabitha, rolling up the woolens Jack had brought. "Thee has thy embroidery or crewels to put in thy time with."

Susanne and Cardiff came in from the veranda, the latter pausing on the threshold and looking backward into the night. Out there somewhere in the shadows was the girl, the one girl—his wonderful Quaker maid; and he tossed his cigar across the veranda with a regretful sigh for the night left outside.

Then he heard Susanne's little, light laugh with the note of disdain in it.

"Now you look like your own French grandmother, Jack," she remarked, "the one in Aunt Mary's parlor, framed in the ebony and gold."

"But I lack both the ebony and the gold," returned Jack, as lightly. "The grandmother in the picture holds a garland of roses, and I—I have only the skeins of silk and knitting needles."

He had never heard her speak in that gay, careless manner; he had never before seen her with her head thrown back, smiling defiance to smiling disdain;

and he saw Mrs. Mintern open her eyes a trifle wider at the challenge. He felt something of Susanne's own surprise when Jack looked carelessly past her cousin and let her eyes for the first time since he entered the house rest squarely, indifferently on his own face.

"The skeins of silk are no less dainty in colors," he said, crossing over to her, "and you lack not entirely the roses."

He motioned to the rose, crimson against the white mull, but his eyes met hers as he drew a chair beside her workbasket, and the roses in her cheeks deepened ever so slightly to give point to his words.

Dorothy and Kirkley, tuning the guitar together, found each other's hands for a quick pressure of appreciation; that is, Dorothy made the initial movement in her jubilation over Mr. Cardiff's devoted attitude, and Rob was ever willing to second such overtures from her.

"What is it to be, music or plays?" asked Mrs. Mintern, seating herself in a great mahogany chair as on a throne. "I am to be the audience. Will you two"—to the couple with the guitar—"sing or read? Or will you two"—ironically, to the couple by the workbasket—"give us a dance?"

She had no idea of a dance in that sedate household. The mere suggestion was made with the mischievous idea of shocking Jack back into the prim, gray Quakeress once more. But Jack had placed her hand to the plow to turn new furrows

in her life, and dared not look back; instead she looked forward and up with a smile of concession.

"Aunt Tabitha is out of hearing of the music, so it matters little which you choose—dancing or singing," she said, carelessly.

"Oh, but it is you who must dance!" cried Dorothy. "I will sing when my time comes, but I will play the Varsovienne first for you. We did not finish it yesterday. Mr. Cardiff broke our dance in two when he stopped at the gate; he must do penance."

"I shall be most happy if it means I may dance with Miss Marquand." He had risen to his feet and was towering before her, while Susanne laughed, and Dorothy struck the first notes of her favorite dance.

"I am but an indifferent dancer," said Jack; "Dorothy has been my only teacher."

"Oh! oh!" cried that damsel, "and my teaching is slighted like that? I insist now on my pupil doing me credit; it is an old dance."

"Perhaps too old for Dick to know," suggested Mrs. Mintern. "He only cares for novelties."

For one blank instant Jack stared at her cousin. Was Susanne attempting to cover a lack in his social training? Did his worldly knowledge stop at the door of a ballroom? Had he counted on her refusing when he seconded Dorothy's suggestion? Had she blundered where she meant only to cover her own heartache? She glanced at him, and, seeing no dismay on his face, felt reassured.

"My way may not be thy way," she said, quietly, "but I know only one, and thee should be easy to teach."

Susanne laughed at that.

"He will more likely teach you more steps than you could ever learn from Dorothy Starr," she observed, and she refused to dance with Kirkley, that she might better watch the lesson."

But her anticipated amusement failed to materialize, as the stately minuet-like measures were trod by Jack with as much of swaying grace, of delicate point, as if she had always breathed the air of ballrooms instead of the fields. After the first turn, her fear that he could not dance gave way to relief in the perception that he could—most admirably—and the reaction lent an added glow to her cheeks and eyes; she was almost happy in comparison with that moment of dread; for the real Dick Cardiff would for a certainty know dancing well, if he knew no other thing.

And the pretended Dick was no less talented. He held her finger tips or circled lightly her slender waist in the turns of the dance, and bent his handsome head above her own with an air of deference no longer conducive to Mrs. Mintern's amusement.

Because the girl spoke with the orthodox "thee" and "thou" and wore sober gray, should the man bend as if at a shrine? She was quite convinced that sober gray could cover as much of iniquity as brocades.

Twice Jack circled the room, alternately pacing and whirling to the measures of the pretty dance,

and laying her hand in his without a tremor. Then she had justified herself to herself, though she had stooped, perhaps, to Susanne's own methods to do it. She made a little gesture of finality as they reached again the settee where the musician was enthroned, and, swinging herself from his light clasp, bent her head slightly and sank beside Dorothy.

"Oh, I protest the lesson is not half learned," he said, as he bowed before her. "I shall beg for rehearsals as some future time."

Future time! Back in her memory flashed his avowal of the day when he would come back to her—some time—somehow!

She raised clear eyes to his bravely, but smiled for the sake of other eyes watching.

"Most likely there will be no future rehearsals," she said, with quiet meaning. "This little dance was for Dorothy. I shall acknowledge to it in meeting, shall be reproved by the elders, and shall promise never to dance again."

"Oh! We all protest at that," cried Kirkley. "I, for one, have been envying Friend Cardiff—and waiting for my turn."

"Your turn will come to read the plays," suggested Mrs. Mintern. "Jack can listen, and thus sin passively instead of actively; she will not need to confess for a proxy."

"No—for myself—when they are sins," said her cousin. "And I am quite willing to listen if Friend Rob is willing to read. What shall it be?"

The volume of plays lay on the table, and Kirkley stood beside her and turned the pages, admiring the steel engravings.

"Here is the doleful tale of *Juliet* to make you weep, and here is the awful *Macbeth* to make you shudder, and here—ah! here is a picture of Forrest the great—I saw him in Washington City in this—the most magnificent Moor one could imagine."

"Ugh!" shuddered Mrs. Mintern, "it was awful. A jealous brute who smothered his wife, though she deserved something horrid for marrying the wretch."

"He's handsome in the picture," observed Dorothy, "and, of course, though the Moor was dark, he was not like our negroes of this country."

"But he had been bought and sold, even though he had become a general," returned Susanne. "So he was a slave, whether he was white or black."

Jack rose abruptly and crossed to the workbasket.

"I can both work and listen," she said, as she gathered up the silks and sampler frame. Her hands trembled and she kept her eyes averted.

"But you lose half the story when you do not see the pictures," protested Dorothy. "This one tells so much—see where he talks to the father, and *Desdemona* listens. I think I should have listened, too, if he told such stories to me—and looked so much like a prince. Here below the picture it says:

She loved him for the dangers he had passed.

And Dick Cardiff, reading over Dorothy's shoulder, glanced up to meet Jack's eyes, as he added:

And he loved her that she did pity him.

CHAPTER VIII.

The next morning Mrs. Mintern had watched Jack leave on horseback for the far fences soon after the sun rose, and for once exerted herself to dress quickly, and throw a slipper at Phebe's head because the little maid was not prepared for the toilet at that unheard-of hour, and was sleeping when called.

"Mh—h! Who did ever heah o' her getten' up at field hand time befo'?" she asked Nat, later, in their private conference down by the milk house. "She's notionate enough at the best o' times, but she certainly is wuss than evar these days. *You* scared 'count o' her meeten' up with your mahstah heah? Shucks! *yo'* all safe! Mahs Mintern is like enough to kill both o' them, an' sell me down South, when he finds us heah; but he ain't likely to touch a har o' you. No, sah! *yo'* got no bad luck comen'—'cept to lose me."

But little did her mistress consider the fears of the two slaves, as she leaned forward on the dressing table and scrutinized her own face carefully, while Phebe brushed her hair until it shone like satin.

She was comparing, point by point, her own equipment of feminine charms with those of that overgrown schoolgirl who, with scarcely a word or glance at Dick Cardiff, had yet held every thought of his the evening before.

There was no doubt of that in Susanne's mind. She was not deceived by his cleverness, by his small talk to the others, and his avoidance of pointed attention to the girl, who—Susanne could see—never addressed him, and scarcely lifted her eyes from her endless work of silks and patterns.

No, it was the feeling in the air of all that was repressed between these two, for Susanne quickly discovered that Jack was quite aware of Cardiff's feeling for herself.

Jack's indifference was the one thing puzzling to her. Was that pretense, or was she honestly careless of the attention other women thought a mark of distinction? There was time enough for that to be investigated in other days; just now—while Jack was away—she might get some definite word from Cardiff as to his intentions; all the previous day she had striven in vain for such an interview.

Phebe carried the message to Nat, and she and Nat exchanged solemn sighs and head shakings over it before it passed on and up to Mr. Cardiff. He, too, had caught sight of Jack Marquand with the rising sun on her face as she galloped past the south garden, and then on across the rolling meadows where the dandelions were gemming the early green.

A fragment of song returned to him as the hoof-beats died away, and his eyes followed her: "Ride light, for my heart is under your feet, love."

He was conscious that the word in the song was "dance" light, instead of "ride" light; his heart was under her feet, wherever fortune carried her.

How wildly proud she had been when she faced him the night before with bright eyes and defiant lips; daring him to fancy she had wept for one moment under the cedars—and, above all, had wept for him! Yet he knew—he knew—and his eyes were tender as though with tears when she rode from his sight through a belt of willows.

"My Quaker maid!—my Quaker maid!" he whispered, softly. "It is the most cruel thing a man ever did to the one woman; but all my life shall make up for it."

With this self-consoling promise on his lips, he turned in answer to Nat's knock at the door and received Mrs. Mintern's message—in return for which Nat received language against which he shut the door and held on to the knob outside.

" 'Fore Gord, it's no fault o' mine, Mahs Dick!" he protested. "I did say I reckoned you not awake yet. But no use in me lyen' to that Phebe gal; so what am I to do? Ef yo' all done listen yesterday to Mahs Kirkley an' me—an' clar out o' this trap—you'd 'a been——"

"Clear out yourself, or I'll come to that door to you!" called Mr. Cardiff. Nat attempted again to protest, but as he heard steps cross the room he fled; and when his master reached the hall it was empty.

When he entered the living room in answer to the note, he fancied it was also empty; and then from a high-backed chair by the fireplace Mrs. Mintern turned, and, regarding him with a much subdued manner, spoke with a little preliminary sigh.

Susanne, in a rôle of meekness, made him open his eyes slightly; if there was an inclination to smile, she did not perceive it.

"You may as well sit down, Dick," she observed. "Jack has gone riding, and Dorothy has agreed to keep the others away from here while we have a little conversation; yesterday it was not possible, but now—well, you realize, of course, that things can't go on this way."

"This way?"

"Oh, don't pretend! You know what I mean. I am so much distracted over it all—really, Dick! Why, I scarcely slept last night for dread of what would happen if Peter learned you were here. You must have some consideration; I have sent for you to urge that, and you must make some excuse and go away, for you never meant what you said yesterday—you surely intend to go."

"Have not changed my mind a particle on that question, my dear lady," he returned, coolly. "I have business here. I told you yesterday I rode out of your way once; I can't do it this time."

"Is that girl the lodestar?" she demanded, suddenly dropping her little air of appeal. "Don't think I was blind last night. Are you on the trail for a pot of Quaker gold?"

"I really have not an idea whether there is a penny in the pot, Susanne," he confessed. "Few men would care."

"Ah! is it so bad as that?" she said, and smiled without mirth. "You'd better let it alone, Dick.

Don't forget that your uncle will certainly think it his duty to warn Noah Marquand—even if I should not interfere."

"You?"

"After all, Jack's my cousin—it might be my duty," she said, watching him narrowly.

"Since when have duties been so appealing to you?" he asked. "And how is your guest, the captain?"

Her face flushed angrily.

"You're a brute!" she burst out. "You're a regular dog in the manger. And you're wrong, too; there was no need to shoot the man—I never meant to go—I never did!" she repeated, vehemently. "You might have seen I only used him to keep the others off, or—jealous!"

"Mm—m! his fitting out the yacht for a long cruise, and the meeting in the arbor, were to make which of them jealous?"

"I tell you, you're wrong! The man did frighten me a little, and I did go there to talk; but—he—the man is a fool! I'll never, never speak to him again! I've done with him!"

"Because he failed?" asked Cardiff, smiling.

"I said before that you were a brute!" she repeated. "If you had not been, you might have prevented it in other ways. You need not have shot the man to get rid of him."

"Oh!" and he smiled, grimly. "I might have helped you keep the other men off? Well, Susanne, I got the credit of it from your husband—so what's the difference?"

"Peter's a fool—and you're another!" she exclaimed, disgustedly. "Do you want to know why I left? No, I suppose not. But I'll tell you; maybe that will convince you! Peter is nursing the captain as if he were his own dearest brother, and that is not all. I—I had to tell that about the kidnaping. I had to tell something. But Peter never lets go for a moment of the notion that Captain Gleason perhaps saved my life and his honor. Oh! you needn't laugh—it's awful! But when Peter almost drove me in to help nurse his benefactor, that was when we had the big quarrel; and he wanted to separate, and I came here. He's likely to follow, of course. I did not hide where I was going. He'll know I'm serious when I come to the Marquands. But he's nursing Captain Gleason so that if the man is found the captain can identify him. He thinks I am shielding him, and that the dear captain is his one friend—so you see!"

"Yes, I see you have made a nice muddle of things with your romances; and if Gleason should tell—"

"I told him I'd murder him if he did!" she exclaimed. "That was my good-bye to the idiot."

"That's a good way to get rid of him," he remarked. "Do you suppose, Susanne, if there had not been a wholesome lot of money settled on you in your own right, that that pink-and-white rat would have risked so much?"

"Oh, you need not suppose there is no man who—" And then her petulance faded, and she looked at him

steadily: "Did you and Peter quarrel the night before you left? Phebe told me."

"We did," he said, quietly.

"About me?"

"Your husband can tell you the reason if he wishes you to know it."

"That is just what worries me. He has not mentioned it at all—never hinted at it. I know it was about me, and his silence means more than his words. Captain Gleason hates you—as he should—and the two together, if they should learn that you are here—"

"You mean if they should know you are," he corrected her. "I came first; you have your town house," he added, suggestively, "and a host of friends to cheer your waiting days."

"I tell you I won't—and I won't—and I won't!" she cried, vehemently. "You are the one to go. Jack would say so if she knew even that you and Peter had quarreled. Oh! you'll find that you have to study the proprieties with Jack Marquand, and you won't like that."

"You are scarcely a fair judge," he returned, with a little irritating smile at which her face flushed angrily.

"You seem very sure of yourself here," she said, maliciously; "as usual, your rent roll commands attention. Ah!"—as his face flushed—"you really fancied because she is of the country that rent rolls don't count. But as I told you last night, they do, my dear boy. You're handsome enough, Dick;

but that won't count with the Marquands. They have always married money—they've all got the Quaker thrift, and Jack will marry money or not marry. But that ought to make it easy for you," she added, maliciously.

"I don't know that I want things made easy by that means," he said, slowly, "though, of course, you mean the suggestion kindly."

"I'll not have you sneer at me in that way, Dick," she burst out, angrily. "You're the only man who dares—and you know it! And I'll not leave you alone here with that girl—never! Let them follow me—let them find us here together. Let Peter Mintern get a divorce as he threatens. You'll be in it if he does. But I'll stay here—I'll stay here as long as you dare stay!"

She was growing half hysterical with temper, and as she came close to him with hand raised in wild emphasis, Mr. Cardiff suddenly took Mrs. Mintern by the shoulders and lifted her bodily into the chair she had vacated.

"I'll tell you what you'll do," he said, quietly. "You'll receive a telegram from your husband to-day, and it will call you back to Baltimore, and —you'll go!"

"I!" She stared at him in breathless indignation.

"You'll go! You are threatening to use influence with Mr. Marquand, which I can't permit; it is not a fair fight. You let me alone, and I let you go free, Susanne; but if not I'll have to use rather unpleasant means."

"You mean you'll—tell?"

"I mean that if you or your husband tries to incriminate me, I'll clear myself if I have to use Captain Gleason's evidence to do it."

"Just as if he would give it!"

"Well, he could make a choice in the matter," conceded Mr. Cardiff, "and also have choice of weapons."

"You mean you would fight him?"

"That is for you—and Captain Gleason—to choose."

She stared into the dwindling flames of the morning's fire for a space, while the man watched her quietly. A duel—for her! One man was enough to know what Dick and the captain knew—each was a good shot—the question would be settled once for all when that was over—no one would be the wiser then; whichever one was left could prove nothing—it would not be so bad; and to be the cause of a real duel was more romantic than a false kidnaping. It seemed really the best way out; but, of course—

"Susanne," continued her adversary, after a long pause, "you will have to recollect one thing in your choice—both you and Captain Gleason. If he prefers to fight I shall arrange that Peter Mintern shall know the rather peculiar cause of the meeting. No more blindfold games with me in it. You've just shown me how risky it is. I'm beginning to value my reputation, and I might as well begin now."

"Yes—by trying to ruin mine!" she retorted.

"A fine, manly, chivalrous thing to do! Oh, the girls who have made a hero of you should know this!"

"No use," he said, shaking his head and smiling at her. "No one is trying to hurt you in the least. When you get that telegram, you make excuses and go back to Baltimore. If you are sensible you will make up with your husband, and all will be as it should be. You have the game in your own hands, but you must decide right here and now what you are going to do with it."

Her eyes moved restlessly from one point to another on the floor, as if vainly seeking a way out of a trap, and then she raised them squarely to his.

"You're a brute, Dick Cardiff; and if it was not for hurting my own name I'd let Gleason kill you and love him all the rest of my life for it. I despise him now and you know it, but I could love him for that—just for killing you!"

"Yes—I understand," he said, sympathetically. "Shall I send the telegram?"

"Yes, you may send it," she replied, angrily. "I wish it was an order for your coffin, Dick Cardiff! I would cover miles on my knees to see you put underground!"

She had her hand on the knob as she spoke, and unconsciously had opened the door a trifle. He made a little gesture of indifference, bowed slightly, and passed through the other door to the veranda, leaving her standing there rigid with fury—helpless in her own trap.

She stood there for several minutes, her hand on the door; but her back to it as she watched her adversary cross the lawn toward the stables, striving—striving with all her might—to think of some move in the game by which she might even now checkmate him.

Neither of them had seen the girl in the riding habit who had stood an instant in the hall just outside that slightly open door, whose own hand holding a telegram had been outstretched to open the door wider when Susanne's words, "I wish it was an order for your coffin, Dick Cardiff—I would cover miles on my knees to see you put underground!" had come to her ears with stunning force.

Dick Cardiff! Susanne had called him that in tones of concentrated fury. Susanne! Then he *was* Dick Cardiff! Like a flash the whole truth came to her—this was the man! All Dorothy's wild romances ranged back into her mind—her theory that Dick Cardiff was the one gallant not at Mrs. Mintern's feet!

She turned dizzily and grasped for the oak railings of the staircase, up which she crept like a criminal, lest they hear her.

Ah! but he was at her feet; it was he who had been the hero of that adventure at Bayside; it was for that he had ridden like a runaway across the line!

She could read the whole shameful story now. Susanne had used her father's house as a rendezvous to meet the man who had shot another one for her sake—that was how the bullet burn had touched

his wrist. And he had pretended to be a runaway slave—willing to pretend anything, even love for herself, if by that pretense he could remain there, unsuspected, to wait for the woman who was to follow him.

They had quarreled about something and Susanne had wished him dead; but what—what did that matter?

The barrier between them before had seemed to her aching girl's heart a thing tragic, awful, insurmountable; yet above and beyond all that had been the illumination of a life, the tragedy of it. The absolute sacrifice demanded had in a way strengthened her with a sort of exaltation to meet demands required of her; but this—

It was mean, low, disgraceful! A degrading intrigue with his uncle's wife, and his shameful use of her help to continue it. Fool! Fool!

She flung herself on her bed, face downward; sick, shuddering with disgust of them both, of herself, and, above all, for this ache in her heart which all her scorn could not smother.

She lost all idea of time as she lay there. No one came near her. No one had known of her return. On meeting a man with a telegram for Mrs. Mintern she had cut short her visit to the fence building, taken the message, and had ridden across the fields straight home. Her nag had walked into her own stall, and Jack had gone as directly to Susanne's room, when she was checked in the hall by Susanne's voice, and after that—chaos!

She heard light steps and lighter laughter on the veranda and the lawn below. Dorothy and Rob were taking Mrs. Mintern for a drive over the country. She heard Dorothy call to Tabitha that maybe they would find Jack in their travels, and she crowded deeper into the pillows, and was thankful—thankful that no one knew she was home.

She had not heard his voice among the others, but supposed that he was at his lady's chariot wheels, waiting for the moment when she might smile again.

Then, after long hours of fruitless thinking, she heard the field bell rung for the men on the farther plantations, and realized that the noon hour was near, and—the wanderers.

She must meet them some way. For a little longer she must make pretense, and dared not consider her own feelings. She had been left in charge by Noah Marquand, and no family disgrace must go abroad from his house. So long as Dorothy and Rob were there no unpleasant scene must be allowed; but privately she would tell Susanne.

Then as she arose from the bed an envelope slipped to the floor—Susanne's telegram—the one she had ridden so fast to deliver, had held in her hand as she walked away from that door, and had forgotten utterly.

She stared at it in dismay. In the light of these late, awful revelations it could but mean but one thing; it must be, it could only be from the husband! Who else would follow her with telegrams?

Jack's heart stood still as she thought of one thing it might mean. No telegram had ever reached the house of the Marquand's except to announce a death; and if it came from the husband, might it not announce the same thing—the death of the man who had saved Susanne from disgrace—whom Dick Cardiff had shot? And if—if the worst had come, Dick Cardiff was a murderer!

"Oh, he must go now; he must go—must go!" she breathed incoherently, as she cast aside the riding dress and found hurriedly the Quaker gray of Susanne's derision. With trembling hands she fastened it, listening each instant for the return of the wheels.

None came. She descended the stairs quietly; no one knew she was in the house, and she wished to avoid all the little household affairs for which Aunt Tabitha would want her atteniton, all the questions apart from the one great question, until Susanne's return—until the worst should be known, the awful thing by which the supreme horror should be added to those awful days and nights.

She held the telegram in her hand and slipped down the back stairs to that entrance to the garden where she had led him to safety on that first wild night, which, to look back upon now, seemed almost beautiful. At least the emotions of it, despite that tragic barrier, had nothing of the coarse horror with which he and Susanne had since colored her thoughts.

At the far corner of the garden was an arbor of evergreen roofed in summer by blossoming rose

vines. The vines were bare now, but for tiny swelling buds where the leaves would soon be; but one could at least be hidden there from curious eyes, and from there she could first hear the sounds of returning wheels.

Her eyes, heavy with unshed tears, were on the ground. When—when would Jack Marquand ever dare lift her eyes again and look the world in the face? All her life of blamelessness counted for nothing now when facing the shame of remembrance of how he had looked in her eyes and made that avowal the night before: "And he loved her that she did pity them!"

Had he knelt at her feet to make the confession, it had not thrilled to the heart of her more certainly; and he had known it—*known* it!

All her attempts at deception had been useless; the triumph in his eyes had caressed her as surely as though his lips had touched her hands. She tingled with shame as the certainty of that knowledge had come to her and she lived again the sleepless hours of the night.

And then she moved into the shadows of the high, hedged arbor, and met him face to face! He with both triumph and pleading in his eyes, and she with the shamed tears in hers.

For an instant she stared at him, her head thrown back in defiance of all he dared dream that he knew; then she turned, with a little repellent gesture, out into the sunshine again.

But he caught her hand and held it in both of his.

"Listen to me if only one minute!" he begged. "I meant not to tell you the truth just yet; it was only a lover's foolish fancy to test what she said last night—I mean Susanne. But it was cowardly —cowardly! And I am at your feet in my repentance. You sweetest woman on earth! it was my own name you gave me to masquerade in when you thought you were hiding a runaway slave. Now will you understand?—now will you listen to me?"

"Will thee please to let go my hand?" she said, clearly. "Yes, I understand thee very well now—very well, indeed! Thee has chosen my father's house to flee to from the house of Peter Mintern; and thee would even profess affection for my father's daughter, that she might shield thee until the coming of Peter Mintern's wife."

"Jack!" he cried, in amazed protest.

"Thee sees now how well I understand," she continued in the low, even tone, in which there was no tremor as she arraigned him. "That thee has quarreled bitterly here with Susanne does not change the fact that it was thee and no other whom Peter Mintern's friend shot at to defend Peter Mintern's wife. It is for thee that offer of reward is posted over walls and fences; and by this time it may be doubled by the State. This message to Mrs. Mintern may tell of the man's death. Thee sees now how well I understand at last, and how wise it will be for thee to ride on to the North quickly."

The tears were gone from her eyes now, burned out by her disdain, and she looked at him squarely, as she had looked across the room at him last night, haughtily and indifferently.

He stared from her face to the telegram she held in her hand. The color surged hotly into his face at her cold accusation, and then receded, leaving him rather white, and his lips set stubbornly.

"I shan't leave here until I speak with your father," he said, deliberately. "I see she has been talking to you, and you take her word against me. I can't blame you for that as things stand; yet—ah!—my one woman—my Quaker maid!—trust me just a little until your father comes. I adore you—can't you see that, Jack? Don't you know I will make a wreck of their lies—or their lives—before I will let that man or that woman stand between you and me?"

"Thee will please to let my name be outside of thy affairs," she said coldly. "I do perceive plainly how willing thee is to make wreck of people's lives. And this," she added, holding out the telegram, "doubtless tells of the end of one of the wrecks—the man thou hast shot."

"You got that—where?" he asked, wonderingly. He had not thought it possible for Nat to manage that telegram so quickly, since he must ride to the station for a strange messenger.

"I met the man when out riding, and received the message," she returned, coldly. "As Mrs. Mintern is not here, I can only suggest to thee what

I fear may be its contents, and advise thee to leave as quickly as possible."

"I told you once that I would ride either north or south at your word. But this is more than merely a question of life and death to me now—it is perhaps a chance for hope and happiness. I shall stay now, though you bid me go, though you refuse to even look at me or speak to me. Can't you see, can't you understand, that the more bitter you are, the more am I bound to prove the truth to you —or to your father? Jack, if *he* is assured I am honest, can't you trust me?"

"Not though thee affirm it with all the list of words thee has stolen from dead poets to gild thy falsehoods with!" she said, coldly, and left him standing there.

When the party returned a little later from their drive, Rob Kirkley found Cardiff tramping back and forth along the cedar avenue, in a mood of wrath incomprehensible to that gentleman.

"No, I'm not going!" he stated, emphatically, in reply to Rob's inquiry. "I'll stay here till the inferno freezes over before I'll be driven out by her lies—or his either!"

"Hers? His?"

"She knows all about it, Rob—all—and a devil of a sight more! If I had Gleason here now, I'd kill him good and dead for putting me in this hole. And she won't believe a word I say, Rob—not a word!"

"For Heaven's sake, Dick, *who* are you raving about?—your grandaunt?"

"Don't be a besotted fool!" suggested his friend, angrily. "It is a girl worth a world of Susannes; it's Jack Marquand, the girl you sent me to. I owe you a something decent for that, Rob! But she tells me plainly she'll not listen to me, though I talk till I'm black in the face."

"Jack said *that!*"

"Yes, and a deal more. Oh, she's no angel—bless her! And I deserve it—deserve every bit of it! If I had not lied to her about the other things, she'd maybe believe me about this!"

"The—other things?"

Whereupon Dick unbosomed himself of the iniquity he had been guilty of in impersonating himself in an emergency, and the dire results following, until Rob Kirkley rolled in the pine needles in unholy mirth, and vowed that for once justice had come quickly!

"And you had a hint of a hope that you could win a girl like Jack after *that?*" he demanded. "Oh! the folly of men when spoiled by pretty girls and their grandaunts! Dick, it's the best thing that ever happened to you. You'll learn what your real value is by the time Jack Marquand gets through with you. Oh, this is rich!"

"And you're a lot of help to a friend," remarked Dick, gloomily. "The worst of it is that Susanne has told her. I meant to, but the woman got ahead—that's the devil of it—got ahead! Jack thinks now that I was forced into telling, and that settles my case."

"Have you spoken to Mrs. Mintern?"

"How could I? You were all out together when this thing struck me. Spoken to her? No, nor will I. She's got the telegram by this time to join her husband; she'll have to leave to-day. Thank the Lord I made her do that! I'll go to the station, or to your place, Rob, to wait for Noah Marquand, and after that—"

"You say you have made Mrs. Mintern leave here?—you?"

"I sent Nat with the message to the station. It is signed by her husband, calling her home—my first forgery. Nat hired a strange messenger to bring it back, so that it would appear genuine to the Marquand family, and account for her going. I tried to cover her tracks, and this is what I get for it! Gad! if there were only a man to fight it out with!"

"There is Dorothy calling us to dinner."

"She is calling you. You go, and you're not supposed to have seen me—understand? I am ranging around the farm somewhere; and you make excuses to leave, and take me with you directly after your dinner is over. I'll be back by that time."

He plunged through an opening in the fir hedge, and was engulfed from sight in the thick green, as Dorothy crossed the garden, repeating the dinner call, and scolded Rob for loitering, and then loitered with him while she told him that Mrs. Mintern's husband had telegraphed for her, and the carriage

was to take her to the station for the train, and she was cross as sticks, and Jack looked half sick, and they were all as dreary as a tomb.

Under which sprightly conditions Mr. Kirkley had to face the task alone of entertaining four women at dinner, during which he cast silent anathemas after Dick for his cowardice in deserting.

The manner of the two cousins on hearing of his disappearance was the one interesting note in the prolonged hour. Susanne was gayly contemptuous of his ability to extricate himself from a bog, should he walk into one in the fields; and Jack, after the courteous inquiry of a hostess, apparently dismissed him utterly from her mind and took too little interest to even smile at Susanne's prophecies as to the different directions in which he might be lost.

Rob concluded that if Susanne had told Jack, the latter had returned small thanks for the enlightenment; for never by any chance did she meet Susanne's eyes at the table, though that puzzled dame cast many an inquiring glance at the cool, quiet face of her Quaker cousin.

CHAPTER IX.

It was an hour before noon when the train from Baltimore halted at the Marquands' station, to unload its limited number of passengers, among whom were two men rather distinguished from the others in their air of the world beyond the farming lands.

The elder was a little, round old man in a very brown wig, and the latest cut in coat and trousers, while the other was of less than middle age, with light blue, anxious eyes, a florid complexion, with the tan of the salt air over it. He walked with a cane, as he moved slowly from the coach to the little waiting room.

"She is not here, my dear captain," said the older man, who had hurriedly consulted the station keeper. "The telegram should have reached her in time—it was started from here at sun up. Something must be wrong; instead of waiting here for the sheriff and his ideas, we will get a carriage here to take us to Marquand's; it is only ten miles, and—"

"My dear Mintern, I can't do it—I really can't!" objected the other, leaning on the cane in a sick, helpless sort of way. "I allowed myself to be dragged into the train trip, but a carriage ride ten miles across the country—I could never endure it —impossible!"

"Pooh! pooh! You said the same about the train trip when you started, yet here you are, not a whit the worse. By Cæsar! you look better—got more color."

"But the wound—"

"Nothing but a bullet cut out, and all doing well. What better can you expect? Gleason, if we are to find our man, my enemy and your intended murderer, we must not lose an hour—not an hour, sir. We will not stop to see the sheriff now; I'll write him to follow us to Noah Marquand's. Noah will help us; he is my wife's own cousin. Where is that telegram? Did I give it to you? No, here it is, and it's too significant to be chance. We are on the track, captain, but this time we must have Mrs. Mintern with us for identification. With the two of you, there will be no chance of failure. She *must* remember, or—the alternative—you know the alternative!"

He shook his brown wigged head emphatically, and folded his arms, as his friend looked even more ill than ever, though he tried to nod weakly.

"Yes, I know, the divorce you threatened. But do you not think—"

"No, no, no!" blustered the older man. "Your persuasions are well meant, Gleason—well meant. You've tried to be a true friend—you *are* one, by Cæsar! You have risked your life for my wife and my honor. And if she is too frivolous to value such devotion, I am not, sir—I am not! But on this question of divorce I am not to be moved, even by

you. She must do her part toward convicting that man, or—"

He shook his head portentously over the alternative, and adjusted his spectacles to read a telegram taken from his pocket:

HON. PETER MINTERN, Bayside, Md.: Suspicious stranger here, gives different names, one that of a relative of yours. Will prevent him leaving county till I hear from you.

HENRY KANE, Sheriff.

"You see, Gleason, we're too close on the trail to give up now. You must brace up to stand it a little longer. We'll have vengeance for that wound of yours, I promise you."

Gleason only groaned, and watched the departing train wistfully. A colored servant arranged some shawls on one of the benches, that he might recline on them while waiting for the carriage. And Peter Mintern busied himself with a note of directions for the sheriff, whom he asked to hold the suspected man until he could return from Marquand's with people to identify him. The suggestion was also made that Mr. Kane might, if he thought best, follow them to Noah Marquand's house, with the prisoner.

A train on its way south stopped at the station a moment later, and the man on the shawls surveyed anxiously Peter Mintern's back, and measured with his eyes the chances of reaching the car steps before he turned.

Though he rose to a sitting position, he sank back discouraged as a tall, fine-looking man in Quaker

garb stepped down, and Mintern's colored servant hurried forward with a series of bows, to relieve him of the coat he carried on his arm.

"Howdy, Mahs Marquan', howdy?" he said, gleefully. "You all don't 'member me, but I'm Mahs Mintern's Jim. I 'member you that one time you come down to we all's place in Baltimore. Here's Mahs Mintern now, jest hot-foot fo' yo' place!"

At that salutation the wounded man smothered a groan of dismay; the helpers on the trail were gathering in, and there was little chance either of escape or rest for the weary.

The second train rolled on southward; and the man sank back on the improvised couch and turned his attention to the newcomer, who was greeted by Peter Mintern effusively, and who listened to the rather confused recitals with a shadow of growing sternness in his fine eyes.

"This is a strange tale thee has to tell me, Peter Mintern," he said, at last. "If Susanne is at my house, and thee thinks she knows the man, she must by all means tell his name. Thee tells me thy friend who was shot is here?"

Mr. Mintern, with much praise for his friend, introduced the two men, and Captain Gleason felt the gray eyes of the Quaker look through and beyond him as Noah Marquand took his hand.

The conveyance came around promptly, and with it a saddle horse for their host.

"I expected to take my journey horseback, but

circumstances changed my plans, and I went by train. This fellow has had a good rest while waiting for me."

He swung into the saddle, a magnificent specimen of a man. Small wonder that in picturing the man of her future Jack had thought of her father as the man he must most resemble in strength and poise.

"I am scarcely expected home until to-morrow," he remarked, as he rode easily beside the creaky carriage. "The steam cars are a great invention for saving time."

"And for saving aching bones," added Captain Gleason, gloomily. "I trust, Mr. Marquand, there is a physician in your neighborhood if one should be needed; this journey is—ugh!—well-nigh beyond endurance."

"The roads are rough after the spring rains," conceded Mr. Marquand. "A saddle horse is best when the roads are bad; if thee would prefer this one—"

But the injured man eyed the prancing, dancing young animal with disfavor; the carriage was less liable for jolts to a sailor.

"I see one of the beasts from my farm ahead there," remarked Marquand. "I think the rider is a colored man, but I can warrant that animal for staidness, if thee has a mind to try it."

He lifted the bridle rein. The animal he rode forged ahead, and a minute later brought him alongside of Nat, who was jogging along sedately, glad

to go slow on his homeward way, after his hurried ride to the station with the bogus telegram, the messenger of which had left him far behind, and whom he was now keeping his eyes open to avoid as he scanned the country roads and lanes ahead.

It never occurred to him to keep any watch in the rear; and when the horse of Marquand galloped up beside him, and an authoritative "Ho! boy," sounded in his ears, he turned in wild surprise.

But no more so than the master of the horse, who saw for the first time that it was not one of his own boys who bestrode the animal.

"Where did you come by that filly?" he asked, and Nat stuttered in his amaze and fear, for every foot of road in every direction was filled with terror for Nat those days.

"Why, sah, that thah filly—that filly, she b'long to Mahstah Marquand—she do! He lives ovah yon—yondah way." This last with a sweeping gesture taking in the whole western horizon.

"But thee—what is thy name? Whose boy are you?"

"Me? Why I b'long—I b'long—"

Nat at that moment caught sight of the carriage and its occupants, and straightway forgot where he belonged. He only had one wild idea of where he ought to go—to warn Dick Cardiff. Obeying that impulse, he dug his heels into his filly's sides, and with an imperative "G'up, thah!" attempted to forge ahead.

But the forging was a brief effort, for Noah Marquand, with swift strides, headed him off and caught his bridle as the carriage came up.

"Now will thee tell me thy name, and where thee came into possession of my animal?"

"Why—why—Ezra, he—"

"Hold on to him! Don't let him go for an instant," called Peter Mintern, standing erect in the carriage, and waving his hands in wild excitement. "It's just as I suspected all along! That's Dick Cardiff's boy, and Dick Cardiff is the suspect the sheriff means. We're on his track; hold on to that boy for all you're worth!"

Noah Marquand stared at him interrogatively.

"Sheriff?" he said, quietly. "Is there a sheriff after thee? Has thee run away?"

"N—no, sah. I—I nevah run only when Mans Dick senden' me; I never did!"

"Then why attempt to run when I questioned thee?"

Nat was silent, glancing at Peter Mintern and Captain Gleason. The latter was white as his collar, and fairly holding his breath to listen.

"It was the sight of me struck him dumb!" stated the accusing Mintern. "Where that boy is, his master is; *that* is the suspicious character who is supposed to be my relative. We'll see now—we'll see! Where are you going, you black rascal?"

Again Nat tried to break away, and failed.

"This horse belongs to me; the boy is heading homeward, so we will take him along," said Marquand,

eyeing the boy curiously, but not unkindly. Nat's first truthful answer had overbalanced the evidence of his desire to escape.

But Mr. Mintern had no such trust.

"Then he must ride in the carriage beside the driver," he decided. "I'm sorry we left Jim behind at the station; he could have held him in. But you have a pistol, captain; your task will be to guard him from any attempt to escape. I will take his horse instead; I have not ridden for eighteen years, but I'll take any sort of chance to reach your place, Noah, before this black rascal gets there. Even now they may have taken warning from my telegram, and eloped. *That* may be the reason she was not at the station. Ride on, Noah. Ride as if for your life! I'll keep up—I'll keep up!"

His will was good, though neither his endurance nor that of the animal was equal to that of Noah Marquand, who held in his own beast—fresh after its two days of rest. But ill matched as they were, they soon outdistanced the carriage, and galloped without words along the lanes and highways; Peter Mintern eager and furious at the discovery of Nat, and Noah Marquand silent and thoughtful, a deep wrinkle between his placid brows as he glanced ever and anon in perplexity at his companion, whose chase and its object—especially the outspoken suspicions—were, it could be easily seen, viewed with little favor by the silent relative of Susanne.

He had heard of the Bayside sensation, and was ill pleased that a woman of the family should be

discussed in superlatives as had been done in the papers in the case of Susanne and the romantic attempt at kidnaping.

Captain Gleason had also come in for his share of praise for gallantry in defense of beauty; but to the eyes of Noah Marquand, he had appeared anything but gallant as he crouched nervously in the corner of the carriage.

Of Dick Cardiff's name he had seen no mention in the papers, but as he rode along he thought of the little neighbor girl he had known long ago, who had moved to the South and married a Richard Cardiff. Peter Mintern's disjointed phrases of wrath had told him but little of the lad who was no doubt her son; and he asked few questions, waiting to see the man.

CHAPTER X.

The man was standing beside his saddle horse, waiting for Rob, who had some final things to say to Dorothy; and Jack, for mere courtesy's sake, stood on the veranda steps to watch their departure, when Susanne appeared at the hall door.

"Jack," she called, "I've changed my mind about going to-day. I'm tired. His message asked me to be there for the three o'clock train. Well, I can't make that now without driving fit to kill horses; so I might as well stay over until morning."

"As you please," replied Jack, quietly, without looking around. "The carriage will be ready when you please."

Cardiff looked at Susanne sharply, but could see no sign of any subterfuge there. She had evidently given up the fight and was accepting his terms, yet was simply too tired for the drive.

For the first time since their quarrel of the morning, he addressed her.

"You say Uncle Mintern telegraphed you to meet a certain train?" he asked, with pointed emphasis.

She regarded him with disdain for an instant, as if in doubt whether to reply, and then:

"You can read the message in order to be certain," she said, sarcastically. "Jack, I handed it to you, did I not? Please let Mr. Cardiff see it; I don't *think* I made a mistake."

Her eyes, mocking, yet with difficulty shielding her anger from the rest, met his as she spoke, and opened a trifle wider as he walked direct to Jack, who took the paper from her apron pocket.

"I did not understand," he remarked. "I thought —I understood that your telegram simply asked your return to Bayside. I did not know you were to meet a certain train."

"Bayside! It was sent from Baltimore, or," she added, with quiet meaning, "it is headed Baltimore."

Without a word, Jack handed him the paper, and Rob Kirkley, as well as Susanne, was aware by his quick frown of surprise that the wording there was not what he expected.

He crumpled it in his hand and turned to her sharply.

"I think you are making a mistake," he said, with quick decision. "You had better drive at once to the station. Your husband is due there before this, and is probably waiting. This message was sent from Baltimore last night."

"Dick!"

Susanne's voice was a frightened cry as she sped down the steps and stood beside him.

"Dick, you are trying to frighten me. He is not— that is—this message——"

"It should have reached you early this morning. It states plainly that he will meet you there."

"But I never dreamed," she half whispered as Jack moved away. "I—I thought you had sent—"

"I never laid eyes on this message before," he said, quietly, and then in a lower tone of command: "Order the carriage!"

"But you—you sent——"

"This is not the message I sent."

"My God!"

She grew white, and swayed dizzily, but Cardiff caught her by the arm.

"Steady!" he said, in a low tone. "This is no time for fainting, Susanne; it is more serious than a kidnaping."

"You're a brute!" she muttered, between pale lips, as she wrenched herself away from him, and then, in a louder tone: "I am tired—that is all. And I—I must have read the telegram carelessly. I did not understand that he would be there, but I will go at once, now that I know, now that I understand."

"Ezra will have the carriage ready at once," said Jack. "And anything we can do to assist——"

"Why not wait a little longer and accompany the carriage?" demanded Dorothy of Kirkley. "You go three miles in the same direction, and it would be only gallant."

Rob turned to Dick before framing his reply; but Dick's eyes were following Jack rather hopelessly.

She was walking across the lawn with her head erect, haughtily, and never a glance toward him. He knew that she alone had heard those words exchanged with Susanne, and the meaning she had read from them, who might conjecture?

If only there was a vestige of a chance of a word alone with her before going—any chance that he could lessen ever so little the growing accumulation of evidence against him!

He started to cross the lawn after her, but she had spoken with Ezra and was coming back. When she saw him approach, she halted with one quick gleam of blazing fury in her eyes.

The cold indifference of the arbor was gone. Before her very eyes they had dropped their mask of intrigue, and had let her hear their half-whispered words to each other. As he dared approach her she stopped him with a look, and walked past as if he had been one of the gate posts instead of a very handsome young fellow, looking at her with his heart in his eyes.

Dorothy saw it all, and was rather crestfallen at this very disappointing ending of the romance she had planned.

Rob Kirkley grinned unsympathetically. As he had remarked to Dick at noon, justice was coming swiftly, and he was joyful that he was on hand to see Dick's undoing.

"You will wait?" asked Dorothy of Dick.

"I think not," he said, rather reluctantly. "My adieus have been said, and if Mr. Kirkley is ready—"

Rob thought he was. There was a whispered word about a call on the morrow, and then the two gentlemen mounted and rode away; and Dorothy went slowly back to the house, not at all satisfied, and feeling a bit resentful toward Rob, whose covert

smiles betrayed some knowledge of the cause of Jack's odd manner and of Susanne's submission to Dick Cardiff's order—for it was little else.

Jack's sudden coldness to both her cousin and Dick Cardiff was the most incomprehensible thing; and the coldness of Susanne to Dick was almost as mysterious. Last night all had apparently been so harmonious; Jack had been so unexpectedly gay, so bright, so smiling, so above all Susanne's clever little strokes. But to-day she was back under high fences of Quaker decorum—only coldly courteous to those two worldly connections of her family, and with a new, strange air of aloofness barring out even the questions of Dorothy.

The little maid felt out of it all, and not quite sure of anything but Rob. Of course Rob was quite worth while, and she was in a flutter of eagerness to tell Jack what he had said to her on the veranda alone last night—or, at least, a part of what had been said.

Jack looked too icy for sympathy with anything approaching a love affair; and now that Dick Cardiff had ridden away, despite Aunt Tabitha's repeated invitations, Dorothy felt that her jubilation over a romance for her beloved friend was doomed to disappointment. Any girl who could send Dick Cardiff away like that—and Dick Cardiff as plainly in love as he had shown himself last night—was hopeless for all purposes of romance. Icy was the only word for her.

Dorothy meant to attempt a thawing process as

soon as Susanne's carriage disappeared. Once the worldlings were gone, Jack might again be the lovable Jack of other days—the lovely, compliant Jack whom she had decked with corals and white satin and danced with riotously.

So planning, she went thoughtfully up the stairs to Jack's room, halting a moment at the hall entrance to look across the field, where a bend in the road might bring the two horsemen again into sight.

Yes, they were moving along at a foot pace, evidently deep in converse; but Rob caught sight of the fluttering handkerchief and waved a satisfactory signal in return. In a brief dream as to the hour when he would come back, and other dreams of the winning of her father to Rob's ideas, Dorothy forgot for a moment all about Jack and her strange manner to her Maryland guests.

It was only for a moment. She was roused by a sharp knock on Jack's door, followed by it suddenly opening and closing; and then Susanne's high tones sounded through the window and reached Dorothy, who stood out of sight in the corner of the veranda.

"I suppose you thought I was going without seeing you again," she said, insolently, "but I'm not. You and Dick Cardiff think you are having your own way; but it won't last, I can tell you that! You might as well know that his promises, especially to women, are not to be depended upon, and——"

"If Mr. Cardiff has made promises to thee which he has not kept, it is as well for thy own honor that

thee keeps the falsehood of it to thyself," said Jack, in tones of cold, cutting anger. "I have no desire to know thy secrets."

"Secrets! Oh, you carry it off well for a country girl!" retorted Susanne, with a mirthless laugh. "Can't I see that he has told you everything—false telegrams and all? He wants to drive me away because he's afraid I'd tell Cousin Noah too much. And you—you think because he's a great catch, has a magnificent estate——"

"Stop!" And Dorothy, outside the window, almost jumped at the peremptory force of Jack's command. "It is as well that thee each leaves here knowing at least one truth! Until this morning I had no knowledge of that man's name, or history, or estates. I thought him a slave, hiding from a master, from bloodhounds, from all the horrors of shackled men. I took him in as I would any other wanderer. I gave him a name—*I*, in jest, for a trick—a sinful trick on Dorothy—gave him the name of Cardiff and never guessed it was his own. I did it as I danced with him last night, to shield him—to help a man I should never see again in this world. He let me think it that he might wait here—thee knows best why. I do know he is the man thy husband has rewards offered for. I do know he is the man who shot thy husband's friend; but I learned it all, not from him, but from thy own lips when thee chose to quarrel with him this morning. There are not likely to be confidences between Richard Cardiff and me."

"Oh-h-h!" And Susanne's tone expressed all that was most mocking and derisive. "A runaway slave! You thought him that! Dick Cardiff! And he—ah, ha! ha! ha!" And she laughed shrilly. "I see now how it was—a new game, the thing we laughed at last night. He wanted to win without his money to back him, and he won—he won! Now I can read between all the lines, and it's a fine thing for Noah Marquand to hear. I wagered a horse, but I can do better now! I can say to Dick Cardiff: 'Silence for silence!' If he keeps silence to Peter Mintern, I can afford to keep your story from Cousin Noah. Oh, it's a fine exchange, and——"

"There will be no exchange. When my father comes home he shall hear every word of that assumed name—Richard Cardiff did nothing to deceive me in that; mine was the fault, the trick. He knew nothing of my mistake until the sheriff reached here that night. Never be deceived by the idea that I would shield myself by any compact between Richard Cardiff and thee—never, never! I trust I have seen thee both for the last time."

"Fare you well, then!" laughed Susanne, mockingly. "But, Jack, all your anger can't hide from me that you were crying when I came in here—crying because he was gone—the runaway slave!"

What Jack did, or meant to do, Dorothy never learned; but Susanne, with a half shriek of fear, tore open the door, and, slamming it shut after her, fled in terror along the corridor and across the veranda. She did not even see Dorothy in her

flight to her own room, from which the latter heard her calling impatiently to Phebe to have the carriage brought at once—at once!

Dorothy, her eyes big with wonder, crept quietly to her own room, careful lest a rustling skirt should betray her to the girl whom she heard sobbing with rage and shame inside the window.

A few minutes later, when Aunt Tabitha went to Jack's room to ask concerning the new carriage robe for Susanne, the room was empty. Jack was not to be found, much to Tabitha's embarrassment when a guest was leaving the house.

And only old Ezra knew of a veiled face at the back door of the carriage house, and of how the harnessing of the team was delayed until a side saddle was put on Jack's favorite; and then of how a horsewoman walked her nag quietly back of the farm buildings to a side lane, from which they had scope to run unseen if they liked, and leave the turmoil of the world behind.

CHAPTER XI.

It was perhaps ten minutes later when the carriage turned from the lawn gate into the avenue, only to be halted there by a faint scream from Mistress Mintern, and a frightened, fervent prayer from her maid.

Two men were galloping up the avenue; one was Noah Marquand, and the other, bobbing along in the rear, breathless and hatless, was Peter Mintern!

"Turn around!" said Susanne, sharply, to the driver. She had no mind for one of Mr. Mintern's scenes in the presence of the Marquand servants.

The man did so obediently, and the carriage had scarcely reached the inner drive when she jumped out and ran up the steps of the veranda.

"Why, Susanne!" began the wondering Tabitha; but Dorothy, who stood beside her, only looked, and said never a word.

"Peter Mintern is on the road there, coming with Cousin Noah. He is angry, of course, because I did not meet him. When he is angry he is most unreasonable and quarrelsome; and I prefer to hear his fault-finding here rather than in the middle of the road!" And Susanne whisked brusquely past her questioner and into the house.

"These are most strange manners, Dorothy," remarked the dismayed Tabitha. "Jaqcynthia should by all means be here; yet, if Noah comes——"

Noah came a moment later, gave quiet observation to the carriage ready for the journey, and the paralyzed maid among the bandboxes.

"Thee had better step down and into the house," he observed. "Thy mistress will not depart yet a while."

Phebe silently obeyed, trembling with fear, and anxious to avoid her master; but she was scarcely quick enough, for he called to her as she reached the steps.

"Tell your mistress I am here. And tell Mr. Richard Cardiff that Mr. Mintern would like a few words with him in the garden."

"Mahs Dick be not heah now," said Phebe, with chattering teeth. "He done left a while back with Mahs Kirkley."

"Kirkley?" said Noah Marquand. "Mr. Robinson Kirkley?"

"Y-yes, sah! I heerd him say he goen' ovah to visit Kirkleysford till Mr. Marquand done come home."

"It's a trick, Noah—a trick!" sputtered Peter Mintern. "He's seen my telegram and lit out! You see, that sheriff was right! *I* was right! It was in my own house the enemy was—and we've run him down—we've run him down!"

"The Kirkleys are the best people of our district," observed Noah Marquand. "And if he is their guest——"

"Their guest! That fellow has the effrontery of the very devil! Will not his money open every

door to him? Oh, he is one of the dashing blades whom the social fools admire! That is why he escaped so easily—friends have helped cover his tracks. But they could not fool *me!* When Susanne refused to describe the man, when that noble fellow Gleason swore he could not identify him, I knew in a minute it was someone near home. And it was! It was the very one I had quarreled with that night for his—his steady watchfulness of her all the evening. I saw it and took him to task, and his revenge was to try and compromise my wife—kidnap her, by Cæsar! If it had not been for Captain Gleason—"

By this time they had reached the steps of the veranda, and Mr. Mintern required all his breath for the mounting of them; but once at the top he began again.

"Now, Noah, I'm going to be calm—perfectly calm. It is your house; you be the arbitrator, you do the talking. If it is not an open confession, it is a separation—nothing but a separation! I will not listen to——"

They had reached the living room, and Susanne was there; also Dorothy, who went soberly up to Noah Marquand, shook hands with him, and with Mr. Mintern, whom she had met in Philadelphia. That gentleman had no remembrance of her face, nor, indeed, did he see anyone in the room but blond, nervous, defiant Susanne. Dorothy did her social duty to Noah's guest just as if he did not regard her with unseeing eyes, and then she turned to their host.

"Jack has gone out, Uncle Noah," she said. "But I shall be on the veranda if thee should have need of me." Then she walked out of the room and left the antagonists alone.

Mr. Mintern glared at his wife. She loosened her bonnet strings, and, putting it aside, sank into an easy-chair.

"Well," she remarked, "I am glad to see thee, Uncle Noah. I came here for your advice, but a telegram from Mr. Mintern was about to call me away before seeing you."

"Peter tells me a strange tale, Susanne," he answered, seating himself and looking seriously at the fluffy, beflowered creature among the cushions. "I have read an extraordinary thing in the paper concerning the shooting at Bayside; and now thy husband maintains it was his grandnephew did the shooting, and that Captain Gleason and thyself are contriving to hide the criminal."

"Peter dreams things and fancies they are true, Cousin Noah," she observed, lightly. "Captain Gleason knows Dick Cardiff, and has no reason to shield him. I scarcely think the men are even friends. Why should he shield him?"

"The captain is following in the carriage. If Mr. Cardiff can be sent for, this suspicion of thy husband's can easily be made clear."

"Following in the carriage!" Susanne reached again for her bonnet. "You mean—you have dared, Peter Mintern, to drag that man here after me? You have dared? I left Bayside because you

kept him there. I hate him! I despise him! I will not exchange one word with him—or even see him! The man is a fool!"

"The man was once an officer of the British navy," stated Mr. Mintern, as if that fact pre-supposed all acknowledgment of intellectual efficiency. "He is the master of a very substantial yacht, and——"

Susanne interrupted with a muffled, nervous shriek.

"Don't mention that yacht! Don't mention that man again, or I'll not be accountable! Dick Cardiff was right in one thing—he said the man was cruising in that boat for some woman with money, and that he was not over-scrupulous as to how he got——"

"Oh, ho! Then it was Dick set you against that poor gentleman? I knew it! You see, Noah, she acknowledges his influence; she——"

"You'll drive me raving mad between you!" cried the distracted Susanne. "I detest your nephew as much as I do your bosom friend, the captain. If you want me to go home with you, you'll have to promise me never to let either of them enter your door again."

"I think your wife shows good judgment in that decision," said Noah Marquand. "These two men seem to have brought strange commotion into thy family, Peter; and if it is against the wishes of thy wife, does thee think it wise to give preference to the stranger over the dislike of the woman thou hast married?"

"She disliked neither of them until this kidnaping, Noah," stated Peter Mintern, promptly. "It is the very reason for this dislike I am seeking for now; when I have found it I shall know who the man is, and why he is shielded. And if it is not Dick Cardiff, why has he followed you here? And why has he taken to the road when he knew I sent for you? Answer me that, Mrs. Mintern—answer me that!"

"Follow *me!*" laughed Susanne, scornfully. "Dick Cardiff followed no one when he rode here. I found him installed as a guest in your house, Cousin Noah. As to the reason for it, you must ask your daughter."

"My daughter! Jaqcynthia had scarcely heard the man's name; no more had I."

"Well, you'll hear enough of him now," she retorted, meaningly. "But it was never to see *me* he came."

Noah looked at her with steady, serious eyes.

"Who, then?" he asked, quietly.

Susanne's own eyes fell as she slipped rings on and off her fingers. How she would have loved—*loved* to have told him! If only she dared!

"I found him here, that is all I can say, Cousin Noah. Only—he never expected me to interrupt his visit."

Noah Marquand and Peter Mintern exchanged glances. There was nothing sensible to be got out of the woman, with her fitful petulance, her nervous unaccountability.

"I can ask Tabitha since Jaqcynthia is not in the house," remarked Noah.

"Tabitha knows no more about it than you do, Noah Marquand. Only Jack knows. Maybe she will tell you when she comes—maybe."

"I like not thy flippant manner regarding the affair," said her cousin. "This is a serious thing to all but thee. If thy kinsman came not here to see thee——"

"He did not, I tell you. I was about the last person on earth Dick Cardiff wanted to walk in here and spoil his fun. Oh, you may look, but I've said all I'm going to. Only—he did not come here to see me!"

At that moment Ezra appeared in the doorway with an envelope in his hand.

"A telegraft fo' Mist'ess Mintern, sah," he said. And Mr. Mintern being nearest, took it from him.

"A telegram!" he said, holding it up and shaking it ominously. "Who knew where to find you here? Who?"

"You did," she said, promptly.

"I?"

"Open it if you have any doubts," she suggested. She knew that he would do it anyway; and the certainty that he was very close to the truth steadied her nerves instead of occasioning her extra worry.

Anything was better than suspense. And if Gleason was really almost at the gates, and if Dick should be made to face him—well, a chaos had come, and what use to fight further?

"Open it," she said again. Her Cousin Noah was watching her with critical eyes. It was for his benefit she was thus carelessly frank. He should see——

"It is my own name signed to it!" cried Peter Mintern, too astounded to hear hurried steps crossing the veranda and halting at the door. "My own name, asking you to go home! But I never sent it—never! The writing is that of Dick Cardiff—Dick Cardiff, I tell you! And in the face of this evidence you dare tell me, madam, that he is not mixed up in this? Is no ways accountable for——"

"Uncle Mintern," said Dick's voice from the doorway, "I did my best to catch up with that messenger, and save you this bewilderment. The man lost the road, else he would have been here before this. It was written to prevail upon Mrs. Mintern to return to your home without delay. Your own message of almost the same import reached here an hour or so earlier, that is all. Will you please present me to Mr. Marquand whose guest I became in a curious way, and to whom I owe apologies?"

"You—you dare, Dick Cardiff, to face me, sir, after—after——"

"Yes, sir. Our parting was not friendly, and I regret you do not feel like extending the courtesy of an introduction. But my friend, Mr. Kirkley, is outside, Mr. Marquand, and will be pleased to speak for me. And if my kinsman, Mr. Mintern, or Mrs. Mintern, knows any reason why an introduction should be barred, I am here to listen, and ask your pardon for dragging our family affairs into your parlor."

"That is a clear, honest statement, Peter Mintern," said Marquand, regarding Dick with approving

eyes. "All thee has brought against this young man is that he sent a telegram asking thy wife to go to her own home and husband. I see no wrong in that, though it does betray some curious interest.

"It does," acknowledged Dick. "I know this man who really attempted to take Mrs. Mintern from her home at Bayside. Knowing the cause of Mrs. Mintern's quarrel with my uncle, I did what I could to prevail upon her to return, and finally I sent that telegram to second my persuasions."

"And why all this interest in the family of thy uncle?"

"I was waiting here to see you on your return, when Mrs. Mintern arrived unexpectedly. Her husband had quarreled with me only a day before—had misunderstood some act of mine. I knew he would not approve of his wife meeting me here, when he was not on speaking terms with me. I did not want to leave; so I planned that Mrs. Mintern should do so. That is all."

"But she knew this telegram was coming—she knew it! There is a plot in this, Noah! Susanne, can't you speak? What have you to say of all this?"

"Nothing," she answered, petulantly. "Only, what he says about the telegram is true. It was sent to offer me a reasonable excuse for leaving quickly."

"Excuse! What excuse need you have for returning to your husband's house?" sputtered Mr. Mintern, angrily.

"Well, when I was almost ordered out, and threatened with a divorce, it seemed I did need some excuse for attempting to go back," retorted Susanne, with a wary eye to the effect of that statement on Noah Marquand. "But the real reason for the telegram was an excuse to the family here for my sudden going away. I could not tell them that my husband had quarreled with this man, and would be doubly furious if he heard I met him here. I was endeavoring to save my husband's dignity. He, it seems, is not so careful."

"Careful! When the message from the sheriff calls me here to find the miscreant I had offered the reward for! Careful! When my own wife continues to hide the wretch from justice! When this man here confesses he knows him, yet refuses to tell us who he is! Careful! When the plots on every side are enough to drive a man to murder! Hell and furies! Dick Cardiff, *what* are you doing here, anyway?"

"I am waiting to explain that to Mr. Marquand and his daughter."

"His daughter!" repeated Peter Mintern, with much impatience. "What has the girl to do with all this muddle?"

Susanne glanced at Dick and laughed. She was not telling, but she was not making it easy for him; and his jaws set stubbornly as he turned and gave her one long, silencing look.

"Mr. Marquand," he said, deliberately, "my relations are making the situation as difficult as possible

for me—the man because he does not know, and the woman because she does. Your daughter is, indeed, the very central cause of my presence here. Mr. Kirkley will vouch for me, if my family will not; and—I ask leave to call when you are less occupied."

"To call—concerning my daughter!" repeated Noah Marquand, staring at Dick with a frown of disapproval. "Young man, I knew thy mother once, and was prepared to hear a good account of her son; but thy own relative here connects thy name with a most disgraceful affair. Thee explains not one word to really clear thyself of suspicion; yet thee supposes my daughter and I will ignore it all. My daughter has no cause to know thee."

"I don't know about that, Uncle Noah," said Dorothy, putting her head inside the window in spite of Rob's remonstrances. "A deputy sheriff insulted Jack two nights ago. Mr. Cardiff threw him from the upper veranda to the lawn below, and I *think* he cured them of searching this house for runaway slaves for a little while."

"You did this?" demanded Marquand.

"Well, there was nothing else to do just then," returned Dick. "But I did not know——"

"Thy excuses are needless." And Marquand crossed to the young man and held out his hand. "I know thee inherited slaves, and still hold them; but thy action in favor of runaways I shall not forget."

"It was for your daughter, not for the runaways," returned Dick, carelessly. "Faith, I was a runaway myself!"

"Thee?"

"You see!" broke in Peter Mintern. "He confesses! It was he who ran from that offered reward! For what else would he be a runaway? Speak out, Susanne! You know, if anyone does. Why else should Dick Cardiff be a runaway?"

Susanne did not speak; she only looked at Dick and smiled indifferently. Since he had needlessly let himself in for the game, let him play it out!

Again Dorothy filled the breach.

"Uncle Noah," she said, much to Dick's surprise, "I think *I* know how Mr. Cardiff came to be a runaway, and the cause does him credit. He ran away to shield someone else, and I've an idea Mr. Mintern should be thanking him instead of blaming him. Mrs. Mintern was not backward in telling Jack a good deal about it to-day, and she could certainly tell you a little now."

"Little girl," and Dick was beside her, holding her hand in his, "do you know what was told to Jack?"

"Well, she heard you and Mrs. Mintern quarreling. Then she went to her own room and cried; and when her cousin followed her there, and told her things of your money and your possessions—well, Jack said some hard things, and I heard them, and——"

"What kind of things?" persisted Dick. "Mr. Marquand, have a little patience with us. I need a

friend here, and this young lady seems to be the only one on my side. And Jack said?"

"Jack said she never thought of your money. She did not know about it. She did not even know that Cardiff was your real name, and she thought you were the runaway white slave the sheriff was after. That was why she tried to conceal you till" —she hesitated and glanced at Marquand—"till she could have help for your escape. You had one reason for leaving Maryland, and Jack thought it was another—that is all. But there have been some big mistakes all around, and the trouble of it seems to have all come on Jack's shoulders. She's very miserable, and someone ought to be made to pay for it!"

"Someone shall pay for it, little girl," said Dick, quietly.

"A runaway slave!" Marquand was staring hard at Dick. "Thee made such pretense to get into my house—to learn——"

"Don't think it!" broke in Dick. "There *was* a mistake on your daughter's part as to my identity, and I did take advantage of it—not for the purpose you think, but for the most natural reason in the world for any man who saw her and had just that one chance to remain for even a day beside her. I did not mean to tell you about it in this way; but, after all, any company is good enough to tell the truth in!"

"By Cæsar!" sputtered Peter Mintern, thumping the arm of his chair furiously. "The sheriff trailing

him on account of kidnaping my wife, and he twists himself out of it by proposing for your daughter!"

Noah waved him to silence.

"Must I understand that my daughter knows the reason?"

"She does now." And Dick faced the frowning face squarely. "I had to tell her—though it was little consolation I got for my honesty. She believes, instead, the story my uncle has told you."

"Well, young man, then what does thee intend?"

"Intend? I'll never leave the county till she believes the truth—that's all!"

"But I cannot countenance such—"

"You will give countenance to justice?"

"Surely."

"That is all I ask. Your daughter was an angel of mercy to me when she thought I needed help; and if this vile story had not reached her ears I should not have feared to take my chances. But now—well, there is only one thing left to do."

"Pray, what is that?" asked Susanne, with assumed carelessness. "You have got yourself doubly tangled up by this last love affair of yours, Dick. I am interested to know how it is to end."

"Not by taking any longer the other man's blame, Mrs. Mintern," he said, curtly. "There is but one man who can clear me. I shall start to-day to find him, and if he does not confess the truth the next bullet will find better lodging than the last."

"Noah, that is Gleason he means—Gleason! By Cæsar! I knew it! I told you so! Here we have the man the reward is out for! He has as much as confessed it! He—"

"One moment, Mr. Mintern, before you ask for chains and handcuffs for Dick," said Kirkley, who had followed Dorothy into the room. "Did you offer the reward for the man who shot Captain Gleason or for the man who planned to carry your wife away on your own horse that night?"

"I—why, confound your impudence, whoever you are! How can you separate them? It was the same man—the same—"

"Oh, no, it wasn't," said Dick, quietly; and Susanne turned white as she half rose, and then sank back into the chair, conscious that the eyes of Noah Marquand were on her, and that their expression was in the last degree critical.

"No, it wasn't, Uncle Mintern. They were two entirely different persons. I, the man who shot your friend, Captain Gleason, was only one of them."

"You own to your villiany! You confess!"

"Yes! And now I'm going to find your friend, Gleason, and let him tell you who the other man is. You're right, little girl," he said, patting Dorothy's hair kindly. "Jack has been made miserable, and the right people must pay for it. I ask your pardon, Mr. Marquand, for—"

"Mahs Dick! Mahs Dick!" called a breathless voice on the lawn. And when Dick crossed to the door, Nat fairly stumbled up the stairs.

"He's gone!" he gasped. "He done hired that driver to turn 'roun' in his tracks, an' go lickety split back to the railroad fo' the nex' train! Took the back track soon as you all got out o' sight! Tumbled me out in the road like a sack o' meal! An'—an' he done sen' his compliments to you, Mahs Dick, an' say he hope the sheriff not only cotch yo', but hang yo' high as Hamen nex' time yo' take it on yo'se'f to interfere in a gnetleman's amusements! An' he say his boat will beat yo' railroad trains, an'— Look out fo' missy! She's a-fallen'!"

Susanne had, in fact, risen to her feet, and, swaying unsteadily for an instant, sunk in a heap beside the chair. Dorothy sprang to her assistance, and Kirkley, at a nod from her, called Tabitha and a maid.

But Noah Marquand stared hard at Kirkley and Dick for an instant, and then turned to Peter Mintern.

"Peter," he said, quietly, "the young man rode here to face this question instead of shirking it, and to me it seems not the first favor he has rendered thee. That other man has taken to flight rather than see again the man who has already interfered with his amusements. Does not this tell thee its own story?"

"Thank you, Mr. Marquand. If—if you will only persuade your daughter of its truth!"

"Time enough—time enough for that," said Noah, gently. "I like thy spirit, lad; and if Jacqcynthia thinks—But never mind that now! Peter,

thee thanked thy friend, the captain, with many words and much care. Has thee no word for thy kinsman, and my guest?"

"He might have told me the truth at first!" growled Mr. Mintern.

"What use?" retorted Dick. "You believed Gleason's lies that night—the lies he told of me to take suspicion from his own plans. You would have believed him again. I thought I'd killed the man—that's why I got away. I did not want to face that story with your wife in it; but when he made up that fiction—"

"And she echoed it!" broke in Peter, with sudden insight. "*She!* Then it was Captain Gleason she shielded from me! And I—by Cæsar! I—"

"Gently, Uncle Mintern!" said Dick. "What else could she do, with the man wounded on your hands. Perhaps she was afraid you'd kill him. The fact that she refused to help nurse him should stand in her favor—even refused to stay in the house with him!"

"By Cæsar! So she did! Dick, my boy, you're a trump! You shot him down to save my wife after I'd almost ordered you from the house! I was the fool, Dick! But how was I to know? You were not there—and Susanne afraid to speak—afraid I'd kill the villain if I knew! Poor little Susanne! Poor little woman!"

And as poor Susanne was opening her eyes and beginning to take notice, the other men silently filed out of the living room and left her with her contrite husband and Tabitha.

Dorothy also slipped out and joined the others, and managed to say to Dick a few words even Rob was not allowed to hear.

"Don't be too discouraged over what Jack may have said to-day," she whispered. "She took her horse and left for the woods, or the fields, because she's just heartbroken over it all. *I* think some one ought to go and look for her."

Of what Kirkley and Dorothy and Tabitha told Noah Marquand of those three days of his absence, there is no record; and of what he and Dick talked for an hour in the arbor, can be left to conjecture. But at the finale of the arbor talk Noah nodded his head, and said, kindly:

"Thee may try. I can say no more than that. The mischief was in part my own doing. I should have sent back word I had met the two colored men from Maryland three miles from here that morning I went away. I took them to the city as my servants, and they were on their way to friends and out of all danger before I started home. As to Jaqcynthia, I do nothing to influence my child —nothing. But thee may ride after her, and thee may tell her I sent you to bring her home."

He had not far to ride. A mile away, on a hill, there was a belt of woods, and along a timber trail he tracked her filly's steps; then ahead, clear against the rosy glow of the lowering sun, he saw her pacing to and fro over last year's dead leaves; and only when he was very close did she hear his step and look up, shrinking fom the sight of him with a cry of protest.

But this time he did not halt at her look and gesture, as he had done on the lawn. This time he could see her eyes heavy with the weight of tears; the white, wretched face of a woman fighting a life battle that was not easy.

"Sweetheart, your father sent me to ride home with you," he said, with pleading in his eyes. "Will you not listen to me now? I shan't try to tell you what you are to me—I can't! But let me prove what I may be to you."

"Thee can be nothing—ever!" she said, in a voice low and striving for steadiness. "Go back and tell Noah Marquand that his daughter will ride alone forever rather than ride beside a murderer, a profligate, the lover of other men's wives!"

"My Quaker maid!" he said, shaking his head and smiling at her. "I am the lover of but one woman. Look at me! Your anger I can endure, for your father will tell you I have not deserved it; but from the one woman I want love only, and I am at her feet. Look at me!"

She threw back her head, and turned on him a look of burning rage—a dull fury of resentment that he could make her feel all she had felt of joy, of horror, of wild, undreamed-of passions tingling, from her heart to her lips in waves of feeling.

She knew—and fought against the knowledge—that, let him be ever so fine a gentleman of blood, of birth, of all worldly eminence; let her be the daughter of generations of sedate Quakers, yet the appeal he made, and to which she responded,

reached back beyond all convention, back to the appeal of savage to savage—or of god to god!

Which was it that swept across the gray-toned page of her life aad left the lurid crimson there?—the sign by which she knew that her own life would never more be her own only; the sign she knew sealed a bond between herself and the man who could never be to her the Dick Cardiff the world knew! To her he would be always that unnamed creature of mystery who had looked into her eyes that once in the moonlight under the cedars.

When she had turned and looked at him at his command, she had meant to express only her passionate protest against the power she would never acknowledge; to send him from her, to trample under foot—

Then her scornful eyes met his steady gaze, she trembled through all her graceful length, put her hand out blindly to a tree back of her, and stood, facing that compelling appeal in his eyes—the sovereignty of a love absolute, claiming only its own when it claimed her!

With a shivering, drawn breath that was half a cry of despair, she covered her face with her hands.

"My Quaker maid!" he whispered, as he drew her close in his arms, and touched with his lips the hands and the burning eyes they tried to hide. "Neither of us will ever be strong enough to fight against this love of ours. Why will you try?"

The dusk had fallen when they left the belt of timber and walked their horses slowly, slowly toward the homestead.

They found Noah Marquand waiting for them at the gate; while Dorothy and Rob remained discreetly on the opposite side of the veranda.

Susanne, the misjudged, had agreed to forgive her husband if he took her away at once, which he accordingly had done. And with them went the last of the three days of discord in the house of the cedars.

Noah listened gravely to what Dick had to say to him that evening, and smiled a little at the impetuosity of those days of strangest wooing ever known, and shook his head in doubt as he took Dick's hand.

"That thee means to be a 'Quaker, or any other thing, for her sake' is scarcely to be desired," he said, quietly. "To be one's self best becomes a man. This mad wooing has been, I fear, too wild to last; yet if it prove not so, she may go to thee —some day. Is that not her dress in the path by the cedars? Tell her the night air is not without danger at this season."

But Lady Moon, emerging later from a lacy veil of fog along the river, found two lovers still there in the shadows—unafraid of the night.

COMRADES

A day of exploding shells and raining bullets; of charging columns, and that roar of a thousand guns that prevents a man hearing the report of his own musket as he touches the trigger.

And between New Creek Mountain and the cool waters of the Northern Potomac the blue and the gray fought, with all the ardor of patriotism, the battle of Piedmont.

A detachment of Hunter's men held in reserve were bestirring themselves, with what haste they could, to prepare a mid-day meal, that they might secure it and perhaps also get some repose, before being ordered forward—an order momentarily expected; for even in the roar of battles tired men sleep, if a space of rest is allowed, and especially do they eat.

But provisions were scarce along that mountain district. Troops had been quartered for so many months through that section of Northern Virginia that not a feathered fowl nor a stall-fed beef was left in all the land, and one of the mess of the Sixtieth Ohio grumbled over the hardtack and black coffee. "Never mind, Clay," grinned one of his neighbors. "We'll be sent to the front before long if there's

anything in signs, and thin rations may stand you in good stead then. You'll not be so wide a target for the Johnnies."

"Well," remarked the good-humored fellow called Clay, "s'pose I do want good strong feed! I reckon the Johnnies will keep us hustling if we whip them, even on a full stomach; and I don't mean to let myself grow weak on the warpath if I can help it."

"That's the reason why he sticks so close to Zachary Taylor," commented another. "Did you ever see such a forager as that boy is?"

"Pretty good," acknowledged Clay. "Have any of you fellows seen him since we halted?"

No one had. In vain they made inquiries of the various boys in blue. Each was at the moment taking possession of the hasty refreshments, and had little time to give thought to an absent stranger. "He's likely prowlen around some farm house looken for chickens," said Tom Henley. "Or maybe the racket along the line has scared him into taking to the mountains. He's never been in a regular full-blown battle, you know, and I guess we are pretty near the place where he said he was brought up—ain't we?" The question being addressed to Clay, who was supposed to know.

But Clay shook his head and gulped down the black coffee.

"No, Zach never saw this region before; he's from Pennsylvania, a little north of this. Told me he never was out of the county he was born in till he went

down the river on a raft, and was so frightened at the water getting wider and wider, that at last he just dropped off on the Ohio side and swore he'd stick to land and let anybody float who wanted to. Then he listed with the rest of us raw recruit fellows. That's about all he ever says of himself. Never had any schooling back in the mountains. It seems as if they never thought him much good at home, and that's why he took to the raft."

"He ain't much good with a musket," remarked Henley. "Say, boys, do you mind the day he told our captain he'd rather fill his pockets full of stones to fight the rebs with, than to carry a gun and bother loading it?"

And the "boys" laughed at the memory of their genial captain's mirth and commented on the absent mountaineer, prophesying that when ordered to the front "Zach" would be missing.

"He'll make a sneak like he did off the raft," suggested one. "I tell you a man who is afraid of river water, and who don't like even to carry a gun, can't make much of a soldier."

But Clay Todd contested the statement. "Maybe if he had a good reason for shooting he'd pull a trigger with any of you. You like to laugh at him because he'd save his lead and throw stones where the rest of you would empty your cartridge belts for a trifle. I take notice the stones he flings always reach their mark."

"Oh, yes; he can throw stones and whistle," acknowledged Tom, "and if he'd only drop into

mess with a canteen of 'mountain dew' I'd give him license to do both for the rest of his life, and by the great horn spoon! Here he comes."

The individual approaching had two canteens slung around his neck, and was whistling a quick-step though keeping no time to it with his feet. A tall, hulking youth he was, who looked lazily around at the hurry and bustle, and halted once to listen to the thunder of the guns at the front.

"Had dinner?" he inquired in a soft, apologetic sort of voice. "I calculated on getting up to you before this, and having some warm things for the mess. If it ain't too late, here it is."

The donation was two canteens of whiskey, and some pink and white chunks of freshly killed pork.

"March pig," he commented, as he emptied it from his haversack, "and it makes the nicest kind of fryen meat for them as cares for it, and I allow you would, Clay."

In a twinkling the meat was in thin strips and being roasted over the coals on the points of bayonets, while the "mountain dew" was passed around impartially.

"Where did you fall on all this, Zach?" asked Henley, remorsefully grateful, and reaching for quite as large a share as Todd. "I just supposed you were out foraging, or else running away from the thunder over there."

"This is a bad sort of country to run in," returned the lazy looking mountain boy, who had enlisted as Zachary Taylor Dorbett. "'Most as bad as the

country I come from. If half the hills were shoved into the hollows it would make easier travellen. And I didn't fall over the provender. I paid for the liquor, and keeled the pig over with a stone. It was in a pen on a porch, and must have been a pet. I swear it seemed sort of low down to kill him, but I only cut off a part and left the rest there for the owner; and I was mighty careful not to make a noise. I tell you now, men, I'm getting even more triflen than they used to call me at home, for I never did steal when I was home."

"Eat your own share of the dinner, and don't waste time," suggested his messmate. "We are likely to be called out any minute."

"What for?" asked Zachary, mildly curious. And his lazy, innocent blue eyes seemed stupid to the others, as Henley grinned and nodded towards the firing.

"We are likely to be the next to move up to the front," he remarked. "How do you feel about it?"

Zachary stooped and picked up some playing cards, flung in the grass by some soldier preparing for battle—perhaps death.

The mountaineer shuffled them from one hand to the other with clumsy fingers, unused to such manipulations. "I don't know as I'm feeling about it at all," he answered quietly. "It kind of vexes me though when I hear them cannon. Some of these days all of them great captains will get together from both sides and conclude to stop the racket, and I'd like to know why their brains don't

tell them to do it before any more men are slaughtered with them infernal cannons. That's about how I feel over it."

Henley's eyes met those of Todd in a smile. Every man of the mess but Todd had decided that the lazy mannered Zachary would be cowardly in the event of battle. He had in him the mildness of a non-combative sheep, and his speech proved that he had none of the spirit of battle which pushes warriors to the defense of their principles—their honor. And even Todd, who had taken a sort of liking to the soft-toned, hulking fellow, wished he would talk a little more like a soldier.

And then the bugle sounded. The waited for summons had come. They were wanted at the front.

Zachary arose, his toasted pork sizzling on his bayonet, from which the grease dripped as he went—the most unwarlike picture one could imagine.

"Where do they want us?" he asked, and slouched along at Todd's heels.

"Come! Fall in, men!" commanded an officer. "Here, you straggler of Company E, do you fancy this is a blanked banquet? Well, it is not, nor a dress parade either, as you'll find out. Drop that bacon and fall in."

Zachary dropped the bacon—into his mouth, and sidled into his place in the ranks, with his big blue eyes resting benevolently on the annoyed face of his officer.

And the officer, amused at the incongruous figure,

turned his back sharply on the greasy-mouthed Zachary, to hide his smile, and proceeded to issue commands for the quick forming of the men, all the while silently sympathizing with himself and muttering about the "stupid louts" out of whom he was supposed to manufacture soldiers.

"Some of those greenhorns will have to fight better than their appearance promises or they will put a mighty black mark on the regiment," he prophesied darkly; and, in scanning the lines, his sombre gaze once more chanced to fall on the placid, irresponsible countenance of the company's jest—Zachary.

Then the lines in front began to move to the inspiring quickstep of the band, and Company E fell into the current and was swept on—on to battle. In where the fight had raged they marched, across the battle ground from which the Confederates had so lingeringly retreated and up further still, toward what Zachary was told was "the front," and where the enemy was yet making a defiant stand.

Once, as the wind blew the smoke away to one side, Zachary perceived other ranks than those of his own regiment, moving on their right, and when he saw the open spaces between the lines of men as they swung around he thought of the even rows of standing corn he had hoed so often in Pennsylvania's hills.

"Who are they?" he asked, curious as a child, though he was marching possibly to death.

"Oh, that's the regiment the boys were talking

of in camp last night," returned Clay Todd, who was on his left. "The regiment they said showed the 'white feather' in the battle of Burk's Landing."

"They look nice and shiny," observed the mountaineer. The next instant his company was ordered forward on the double-quick, and descending a knoll he saw reaching out before him the terrible tempest of battle.

"My God! Look at that!" said Clay, half unconsciously, as a field piece pointing towards them from across the level belched forth its fury, and a great swath of men in blue were mowed down as when a scythe is swung through the grass of the meadows.

"It's hell let loose—that's what it is," said Zachary, and he gripped his musket tighter as he trotted forward. He saw their captain and heard the quick, sharp commands, but Zachary did not heed them much. It was easier to just watch the rest and do as they did, as they advanced on the enemy, firing volleys at regular intervals as they went. The smoke was so thick that he could scarcely see at what he was firing; but he could see the flag there ahead and had a half formed idea that they must all keep up to the flag. That was just about the extent of his knowledge of military tactics, after all the drilling he had gone through.

Then somehow in the turmoil he drifted away from his one friend, Clay Todd, and the faces about him were seen as in a mist and whirl of tempests. But the men wore blue coats and were firing at the

grays, who held a knoll; and he fired when they did and kept his eye on the flag.

And then something happened. Right before him a great shell burst, and men fell in every direction. For one instant he saw the man who carried the flag whirl around like a top, and then the flag wavered in his dying hand.

But it did not fall. Zachary never knew how he reached the man's side; but he leaped over the mangled bodies before him and caught both the flag and its bearer.

The bearer was a man with gray in his hair, and he leaned heavily on Zachary's arm and clutched at the flagstaff for support; then realizing that earthly help was past for him, he relinquished the colors and looked up into the tall mountaineer's face.

"You take it," he whispered, "and to the front —there—to—the—front!"

Zachary nodded, and eased the man to the ground, from where he never arose, and a new color bearer carried the flag forward.

All was crash, crash about him. He heard no orders from officers. The crack of the rifles, the thunder of the cannon, the cheers, the groans of the dying, were whirling together in his brain.

He realized that he was in a clear, open space. Before him was a level field; and beyond that, on a rise, the mass of gray-garbed men, and the white line of smoke floating upwards from their guns.

He turned once to see where the bluecoats were, and found they were behind him, and seemed to be

wavering. He heard furious commands and oaths from his captain, while from the right there swept in that regiment he had thought so nice and shiny.

He saw their colors floating proudly above the thin blue-white smoke—the colors of that regiment which the men said had shown the "white feather" once; and it was going into action ahead of his own company. That other man, the man who carried that other flag, was going up where he had been told to go by their grizzled color bearer. And his own flag! He looked up where its graceful folds floated softly above him. Was it to waver in his hands?—to go back to the rear, while that other regiment, called cowardly, took first place?

He had never been taught a prayer in his life, but something like one arose to his lips as he looked back at his own company.

"Oh, God—come on!" he muttered, and waving his hat to them he started ahead, alone, for that knoll on the crest of which the enemy was entrenched.

He heard shouts behind him, but he never halted until he had dashed past the line of that other regiment. He expected with every step the shot that would kill him as had been killed the other color bearer, but he felt a grim determination that it should kill him ahead of that other flag, and not behind it.

When he had passed them all he stopped at a shout from behind him. It was a command from his captain, who was hastening furiously ahead of

the line to prevent both bearer and flag from falling into the hands of the enemy.

"Come back, you fool!"—he shouted, "come back! Bring the colors back to the regiment!"

Zachary lifted the flagstaff and drove it down furiously in the meadow soil.

"Bring your regiment up to the colors, Captain," he shouted stubbornly. "For I'll be damned if this flag retreats while I carry it."

The men of his own regiment could not hear his words, but the action spoke for itself, it was so eloquent with meaning. And, with a cheer that leaped upwards to heaven, the boys of Ohio swept forward to first place in the front line—nor relinquished it until the day was won.

Zachary watched them coming, and a large, lazy smile broke over his face, as he looked from the elevation he had reached, and complacently eyed that other flag, now in the rear of the ranks of his own regiment.

Then a ball struck his arm and stung like a burn and his wrist dropped, nerveless, and the flag had to be held in his left hand.

From that on all was a tempest about him, and he no more stood alone. His comrades were fighting around him, and he did not know whether they were following him, or only bearing him with them; but all together they were advancing on the knoll. Once he stumbled over a dying man, and in the new awkwardness of his wounded arm, he could not recover himself quickly, and the flag wavered with him downwards.

"The colors are down!" some voice shouted, and then there was a cheer. He thought it was a cheer from the Southern men, and he recovered himself and lunged forward in a sort of fury up the steep bit of bank the enemy had fought so valiantly to hold.

"The colors are up!" called Zachary over all the turmoil; and holding the flagstaff against his breast with the elbow of his wounded arm, he used the other for assistance and defense, as he dug his fingers into the bullet-riddled bank and pulled himself up to the summit.

Two gray-clad arms lunged at him with a bayonet, another cut downwards at him, and he only avoided a murderous blow by swinging to one side. One bullet carried his cap from his head, and one clipped off a bit of his ear; they went zing—zing—past him, but he never moved; and then the bluecoats rushing up to where he had led, made a final charge over the knoll that had been a fortress, and scattered or captured the defeated defenders.

And the mountaineer, standing there on the breast works with the colors yet hugged to his breast, listened to the cheers of victory, but did not join in them. He was thinking strangely of that gray-haired color bearer who had given the flag into his hands.

"Well, I took it where he told me to go with it, up front," he told himself, and looked around doggedly as he heard the voice of his captain near him. He expected at least a reprimand for disobeying

orders, and then remembering that he had sworn at the captain, in addition to being insubordinate, he concluded he would be court-martialed—maybe shot.

For it never occurred to him that he had saved the reputation of his regiment; that but for his example those wavering, raw companies holding back there would have communicated their panic to the rest, and have caused a stampede in the face of the enemy, and under the eyes of the other Federal troops, who would ever have held them in disdain from that day.

But Zachary knew nothing of that, and only looked mildly puzzled when his captain said:

"Dorbett, you are a credit to your regiment, and I thank you for helping to make your regiment a credit to you in this engagement. The general wants to speak to you."

Then he stepped aside, and the mountain boy perceived the simply uniformed man whom he had admired from afar, but by whom he had never hoped to be noticed. And the tawny, keen-eyed commander glanced over the uncouth figure holding the flag, noted the useless hand dangling from the wounded wrist, the bared head and the blood trickling down along the ear and neck, and Zachary gazing at him in complacent admiration, not understanding at all what the captain meant by speaking of the regimental credit.

He had even forgotten the iron-clad requirements of military discipline, and did not salute the commander until reminded by the captain.

But the commander did not seem to notice that, or at least did not allow it to prejudice him, for his eyes rested kindly on the raw recruit.

"What is your name, my boy?" he asked, and Zachary remembered to salute that time as he answered:

"Zachary Taylor Dorbett, Private, Company E, Sixtieth Ohio."

"And to-day most notably a color bearer," concluded the general. "Well, Zachary Dorbett, I saw you plant that flag down there and call your regiment up to you; I saw you later, disabled as you were, make a stand here alone on the bank, in the face of terrible odds—the first man to mount it. For the valor of that act, and for the example you have set your comrades to-day, I make you color sergeant, and am glad to be able to show practical appreciation of courage like yours, my boy. You have the stuff of a brave soldier in you. See that you never fail the cause you fight for."

Zachary grinned sheepishly at the words of praise, having little idea of what it meant to most men to be promoted in one's first engagement for valor on the field of battle, and promoted, too, by the general in person.

"I don't reckon I know much about being sergeant, but I'm glad enough you think I carried the flag right. And if I'd had some rocks in my pockets I could have spieled over some of them 'rebs' who were hustlen me so close. But it's all right anyway, and I'll tote the flag, or be any kind of a soldier you want to make of me."

The general smiled as he walked away with the captain.

"If you have many like that one, you have need of a strict drill master," he remarked to his subordinate.

"He has no more idea of discipline or ambition than a pig," answered the captain. "Yet, when aroused, he has the very devil in him. Well, we cannot have too much of such raw material. From it our best soldiers are made."

Thus ended the day of Zachary's first battle. And when camp was pitched for the night he slouched around, in a shamefaced way, to the boys of his mess, whom he had carefully avoided after the engagement. He was pretty sure they would make fun of him because he was the one among them to be chosen for promotion. But when Tom Henley jumped up and grabbed his left hand and squeezed it hard, and then turned to the rest and said:

"Three cheers for Zachary, boys!" And when the boys swelled the chorus for him, and regarded him with a sort of puzzled respect—well, Zachary could understand that better than he could the words of the captain or the general.

And before they broke camp, Clay Todd helped him to write a letter to Mrs. Bethia Ellen Dorbett, of Fayette County, Pennsylvania, telling her of his promotion, and of the little clip taken off his right ear. "Just like they mark our pigs at home," he confided to his amanuensis. But he concluded he would not tell his mother of the arm that was dis-

abled, or of the right hand that would never be quite strong again, as the army surgeon said.

Afterwards, Private Todd always approved of himself for insisting that Zachary should write home at once. Otherwise none of Zach's comrades would have known Mrs. Dorbett's address.

They were crossing the Potomac in the early dusk of the morning. Hastily constructed rafts had been passing and repassing with a brigade which had been ordered eastward, along the Maryland shore.

Several times men skirmishing out from the main body had been picked off by sharpshooters concealed in the vast forest, or the thick underbrush along the shores of the river.

And so it chanced that Sergeant Dorbett was singled out by one of those hidden marksmen, perhaps because he was taller than his comrades. He was on the very edge of their rude craft, and when hit, fell straight back into the water without a cry; but not before his comrades had seen the murderous wound in his head.

"Well, it don't matter now to Zachary whether his grave is in the ground or the water," remarked one of the men. "And we could not have helped him anyway, for he was dead before he went under."

And when the regimental list of the killed was made out, the name of Color Sergeant Z. T. Dorbett, Company E, Sixtieth Ohio, was included, and Private Todd carried out what he thought would have been the dead soldier's wish, and wrote the sad news to that mother up there in the Pennsylvania mountains.

And the waves of the vast armies swept on, carrying before them ever the wreckage of hearts and homes. And the uncouth boy who had been the butt of the company jokes, and who had carried the colors that one day, became only a far-away memory in the minds of his comrades whom the fortunes of war were driving through many battles across the land.

* * * * * *

In the sorry days of reconstruction, after that final meeting at Appomattox, various were the ways to which the people along the dividing line of the States were forced to resort for livelihood. They had been so willing to face starvation as long as there was the hope of victory as an inspiration. But the cold, spiritless existence on the ruins of shattered idols! Ah, well! The starvation of the heart is harder to endure, sometimes, than the starvation of the body.

Even the freed blacks, childishly dependent as they were on white guidance, enjoyed more of privilege in some ways than their former masters; for they had no fires to rekindle on the wrecked altars of homes made sacred through generations of ancestry.

And a little way up from the Potomac, on the Maryland side of the river, one of those colored men —a refugee of war days—had found for himself a little cabin against the hill where a spring bubbled.

The freed colored people did not usually lead an enviable life in that district; but, some way, old Jubal was allowed more privileges than most, per-

haps because he was such a cheery, helpful fellow, besides being an herb doctor who never levied fees heavier than a little corn meal or a few potatoes, and who was always ready to aid any one, without question as to color or condition.

"Fo' I was a strangah in youah lan' an' yo' took me in," quoted Jubal sometimes to the white neighbors who commended his wide charity; for Jubal was wonderfully religious, and was very fond of repeating the texts of the preachers whom he had heard in his day.

Jubal was not alone on his little estate where the spring bubbled so cheerily and the high hills leaned close as if to shelter the small plateau where he worked. There were two rooms in his little house. One was a "lean-to" where the cook-fire was and the few dishes and the hickory and tools with which Jubal made chairs and baskets on wet days. Over the more pretentious front room was a loft reached by a ladder, where he slept on a "shake-down"; while on the "sure enough" bed below stairs Mr. Malcolm Poindexter took his rest.

The people about there were always a little curious about Mr. Malcolm Poindexter, who surveyed callers with quiet dignity and addressed them civilly and retired promptly to his own room when they sought to penetrate his reasons for thus living year after year with never a white companion—no one but Doctor Jubal.

He seldom conversed with strangers, and when asked what branch of the army he had belonged

to (because he always wore the blue of the North) he only replied that he liked the color, and did not wear it because of any particular reason. And after awhile the people all concluded that Mr. Malcolm Poindexter was "queer" in the head, and it was generally believed that he was a branch of a grand Carolina family whom Jubal said he had belonged before those days of carnage.

But this Poindexter of the blue clothes and the blue wondering eyes was not at all grand. He would fry the fish and bake the corn cake against Jubal's home-coming many an evening, and he had considerable skill in manufacturing baskets of white oak splints—work, however, that he never touched if any but himself and the herb doctor were there.

"Fo' 'tain't no use argin' an old worn out debate with me, Mr. Malcolm, honey," old Jubal would say with respectful authority. "No one called by the 'ristocratic name o' the Poindexters evah did stir up hoe cake an' sich like work, an' that's just the true reason I give you that fine quality name. I like the freedom, an' I like this fire of my own an' this roof of my own. But there is one special thing I certainly did grieve after in this land, an' that was quality folks—the real, ole kind o' quality, thet was so fine an' grand, an' walked like the rulers o' the airth all ovah Callino."

"Yes, you've told me a heap about them, Jubal," said Mr. Poindexter, with the pleased anticipation of a story in his eyes. "They must a' been mighty fine folks, an' had great goings on."

"Um! You don't rec'lect nothen at all concernen them?"

"Nothing at all, Jubal."

And then the odd pair sat in silence and thought for a little while—a season of thought likely to be repeated to-morrow, and all the to-morrows, for it was a question asked by Jubal daily, and the answer was always the same, and had been the same for six years.

"An' so," continued Jubal, "I don't noways allow these poo' white trash 'round here—folks that never did live 'mongst quality—I don't noways allow to let them see you beaten up the batter an' sich like. You got the fine name o' the Poindexters, an' you is moral bound to keep up the dignity o' that name. Huh! How you allow to do it with the batter crock, honey?"

"But, maybe, Jubal, the batter crock fits me better than the fine name," and the tall, blue eyed fellow stared gloomily into the fire where their supper cooked.

"Now, don't you get to think like that, child—you hear me!" said the old man hastily. "Fo' you well know that when you get cloudy thoughts in youah haid, it's bound to pain you shameful spite o' my docteren. Why shouldn't that name fit you good? Don't you mind well how I said, first time I sot eyes on you, that you certainly must be cousin to the Poindexters? Jest the same tall, easy sort o' man as they, an' with eyes as blue as that other Mr. Malcolm, who was so petted on me, an' who died

jest afore the war come along; an' jest that same low voice, easy way o' talken that they had; jest the real quality way; no sah, don't you never talk to me about batter crocks. Somewheres we'll hear tell o' your family, one o' these days; an' when we do it's sure to be among quality folks. Now you mind the words o' Jubal!"

"But it won't be among the Poindexters," said the other man with a smile. He always pretended to treat the prophecies of Jubal as a jest.

"Why not, now? It's jest as likely"—

"But not very likely they would be wearing this color o' clothes," and the white man glanced down at the army blue of his garments.

"No, n—no," assented Jubal. "The quality folks of ole Callino did sure despise them blue colored uniforms. That's the onliest way I can't reconcile you an' my Mr. Malcolm, 'cause he never would a' worn them, an' you kind o' feel lost in any other color—that's curious, honey, it's certain curious. But it's kind o' lucky, too, seein' as I picked up such a powerful lot o' soldier clothes when followen along the trail of Morgan's raid into the Ohio State. I tell you it was amazen the lot o' plunder his men gathered up that they couldn't carry. I picked up all the uniforms I could stagger under. I was too old for the fight or the march, but was still able to look after one sick soldier when I found him—one who had nigh about give his life for my freedom—that's jest the way the notion looked to me, Mr. Malcolm. An' it do look like as if the Lord had sent us blessings

evah since, for our baskets certainly do bring a leetle higher price than many I see. An' that sort o' work an' the ginsang hunts do agree with you wonderful."

"Yes," assented the man, who was generally a listener at their fireside—Jubal was the conversationalist. "Yes; but do you know, Uncle Jubal, we haven't been in the woods to live for a long time?"

"Well, there now!" And Jubal's wrinkled black hands clapped his knees in delight. "I was thinken o' that very thing myself to-day, an' wondered if you'd mind it—an' you did! You did all by yourself! Oh, I tell you, Mr. Malcolm, that trouble in youah haid's menden mightily—it certainly is. I'll be expecten to have you wake up some o' these mawnings an' tell me all about where you was brought up, an' how you got that skull wound that's hurt your memory so much, an' all sich."

The kindly colored face was beaming with anticipation; and all the while he was watching, stealthily, the face of the other man to learn if his enthusiasm was at all contagious, or if any gleam of memory shone in the eyes of Mr. Poindexter. He ever hovered around the bearer of that honored name, like a nurse guiding the instincts of a child, and sometimes the means resorted to by the darkey guardian to arouse the interest of his protege were grotesque in the extreme. But to Jubal they were all-absorbing, and had been, ever since the day when he found the wounded soldier.

Just after the battle of Piedmont, the armies had passed on, leaving this disabled one; and Jubal had found him stretched, wet and unconscious, at the river's edge, and so near death's door that it took all the science of herb cures to get him on his feet again. But the science of herbs could not bring back the memory driven out by the murderous lead. Still, old Jubal did what he could, and felt a comfort in thus working for the Union. And then his fondness for his patient grew strong through the utter dependence on him of the tall, young "bluecoat" – a dependence instinctive and not reasoning—the dependence of a little child who must be taught all things.

And then Jubal named him, and took to himself a protege as master, being not without pride at the effect his Mr. Poindexter produced on the few people who ever saw him. The silence of Mr. Poindexter appeared like dignity and superiority to the people of the sparsely-settled neighborhood where Jubal did his doctoring and tinkering and manufacturing. And never under any circumstances was the master allowed to assist at the chair or basket making if any alien eyes were about.

Mr. Poindexter must—in the eyes of society—live like a gentleman, and Jubal could not imagine a gentleman doing anything so low-down as manual labor.

And while Mr. Poindexter really preferred the labor, when no one was looking, he became little by little imbued with Jubal's own ideas as to position and caste, and more than half believed the old

fellow's prophesies as to a probable grand past and a mystical, fairy-like future that would one day come to him.

"When you finds youah own again, honey—hi! I tell you of one black man who will dance the pigeon-wing that day," he was in the habit of saying; and Mr. Poindexter would smile in his quiet way and nod, and over their evening fires they would build fine castles out of their imaginations —a pastime Jubal delighted in.

To those two living in their log cabin, away back in the river hills of Maryland, no newspapers ever came; and neither could have read them if they had come. Their nearest neighbors were over a mile away—a family whose only occupation was the making of shingles to ship down the river on rafts, in the springtime, and whose knowledge of the great outside world was as limited as that of children.

The way in which the master directed the affairs of their little home would not have been very plain to an outsider, for Jubal would generally say: "Mr. Malcolm, don't you reckon I'd bettah work in the garden patch this mawning? They's sure to be a shower afore night."

And Mr. Malcolm would invariably reply: "Yes, Jubal."

Or sometimes it was a trip to the settlement where the baskets were sold, or a journey into far timber lands for certain medicinal roots; but wherever or whatever the action, the old darkey would say: "Don't you think we'd bettah, Mr. Malcolm?" And

the answer was always the same—"Yes, Jubal."

And thus did Mr. Poindexter rule; his ideas always being but a shadow of the thoughts of Jubal.

But one morning, when the robin was building its nest in the tall wild cherry by the door, Mr. Poindexter sat in the early sunshine with his head on his hand, until Jubal, drawing near and noting something unusual in his face, asked: "You sick, Mr. Malcolm?"

"No, Jubal."

"That hole in youah haid ain't given you trouble again?"

"No, Jubal."

But Jubal worked in the little garden patch and kept one eye free to note any further symptoms of illness, mental or physical, in his master, who all the morning was unusually quiet, and seemed actually to be thinking.

At last, however, when the old darkey came near to rest a bit in the shade of the wild cherry, Mr. Poindexter said:

"Jubal, you've told me a heap about dreams, just what they are like and all. Well, I never could understand what you meant before, but I reckon I do now, for I surely did have something like a dream last night."

"Glory! Now! It's one step more—one step nearer," cried Jubal, hugging himself in his delight. "Now, honey, I see plain why you been thinken so solemn like all the day. Now, Mr. Malcolm, le's heah youah dream, true as you can mind it."

"Well, Jubal, I'm only maken a guess that it was a dream," said Mr. Poindexter carefully. "I never had anything like it before and it worries me someway. It started off with that toothache root you allowed yesterday you must go and hunt."

"Toothache root? Oh, yes, I mind about that," nodded Jubal. "I was kind o' discouraged 'cause it's getting so powerful scarce. Yes, I mind."

"It was the scarceness I dreamed of first," said Mr. Poindexter. "We was maken search along the banks of a little branch, and we found leaves that looked like it—leaves like little strawberry runners, but when we dug down for the root they didn't have the little white jointed root o' the toothache cure."

"Humph!—that's easy to dream," murmured Jubal. "Now I was in hopes you'd dreamed where we could find the true kind."

"That's just what I did, too," affirmed the dreamer. "But I've been tryen, tryen hard, all this day since I woke up, to bring in my mind just where we got on the path that took us there. It was a long, long way. We crossed over a river, and up into mountains where the big laurel was thick all along the high streams. We went along one place where the rocks were bigger than houses, and away in between them we found ice and snow piles, though all around that place the little laurel was full of flowers."

"That's to the north," said Jubal, complacently, "now go on, honey. What else growed there?"

"The trees you call water birch was all along

where the rocks were, and some pines, and — oh, yes —"

He stopped and stared at Jubal as if for a solution of some thought that swept to him suddenly.

"Well, Mr. Malcolm — well, what is it?" asked Jubal, nervously; for after a lethargy of five years Mr. Poindexter was aroused to something of independent thought and imagination.

He did not answer at once, but looked up into the wild cherry tree where the mated robins were chattering busily over their new nest. Then he said: "Birds like that were there, and I was talken to them in my dream, and they would answer me."

"Law, Mr. Malcolm, how would wild robins in the woods know how to talk youah talk?"

"They didn't; I talked their talk, just like you whistle when you call to me from away off."

Just then the robin above him chirruped as it fluttered about, and looking up at it he puckered up his lips, hesitated and looked at Jubal in a shamefaced, apologetic fashion, and then tried to answer its call.

The first attempt was a little clumsy, and the bird turned its head on one side and surveyed him in derisive silence; but when he called again in a lower, softer strain, she fluttered to a twig lower down, and sent out again her wooing song.

"That is just what the bird in my dream whistled," said Mr. Poindexter. "Only there were other birds, too."

"Try and whistle some more, like other kind o'

birds, too," cried the delighted Jubal. "I tell you, Mr. Malcolm, there's a heap in dreams sometimes, and you ain't maken them bird calls for the first time in youah life—no, sir. Why, I couldn't whistle like that if I tried a year—I couldn't. Now, honey, that dream done mark a path for us to walk in, it certainly did; and we'll start on it afore long, if the Lord's willen. But you keep up a whistlen, Mr. Malcolm."

And Mr. Malcolm did so, and, as much to his own amazement as to that of Jubal's, he found that the birds themselves were often decoyed by his calls.

For many days Jubal watched Mr. Poindexter closely through breakfast, and then, observing nothing unusual in his appearance, he would ask: "No dream come last night, honey?"

"No, Jubal."

But Jubal asked early and often of Mr. Poindexter's one dream, and of the exact ledge of rocks where the laurel and the water birch grew, and of the sort of little ravine in which the desired toothache root buried itself. And the result of Jubal's thinking over the affair came to a climax when one morning he said:

"Mr. Malcolm, I've been thinken we sartinly ought to try and hunt some o' that toothache root. Seems to me most everybody I try to sell herbs to asks first thing for toothache cure. Now, we ain't been on a real tramp nowheres since way last fall and I sort o' crave a change. Don't you think we might jest shut up the house for a few weeks, and

take the way up across that river, and into the north country where that toothache root grows?"

"Yes, Jubal."

And thus it occurred that Mr. Poindexter and Jubal set forth, much as two children would wander into a wilderness for a picnic. With well filled haversacks, they marched like kings along the shadowed by-paths, where the birds called to them as they went. Where the widely divided farms were reached they were always almost sure of a mug of milk, though often accompanied by kindly meant questions sadly confusing to the white man. What regiment was he in? Where did he get the wound in his head? And why was his right hand and arm shriveled away until it was so much smaller than his left?

And Mr. Poindexter could only roll up his sleeve and show where a bullet had evidently entered, and another place where it had been cut out again, and then he would generally walk away, and Jubal be left to explain, as best he could, that his master's head had been injured so much that it was bad for him to think of or discuss his wounds; and then he would always manage to ask carelessly if any neighbors about there had been in the big fight down by the Potomac River—the one that folks called the battle of Piedmont.

But no replies seemed to satisfy him, and then they would tramp on — the white man and the black, each clad for this quest of theirs in the blue uniform of the North.

And as ever when they chanced to pass any fine estate, Jubal would say:—"Maybe now, Mr. Malcolm, some of youah kinsfolks live there." Or if a finely equipped carriage went by them on the road, they would look at each other in silent understanding that some day they would ride just so; and Jubal was to drive the horses. For one of the inborn ideas of Jubal's soul was that gentlemen always did keep horses and carriages.

Then they reached a great wide road called "the national"--the finest road they had ever seen, as it wound around mountains, and dropped by easy gradations into the valleys. Jubal asked where the north end of it led to, and was told by a farmer of its wide reaching length across the States, and that after passing through the great meadow country it wound the last mountain, that mountain called "the Laurel range."

"Laurel range!—Laurel!" repeated Jubal in some excitement. "Big laurel grow there?"

"About as big as you're likely to find," remarked the stranger, "and lots of wild land along it. But the meadow country on this side, and the settlements on the other side, are all pretty clear. You'll reach the laurel hills in a couple of days' easy walken, and I guess your boss ain't a fast traveler, is he?"

"No, sir—no, he ain't. A bullet scraped the inside of his skull too close to leave him the same strong gentleman he has been. But we do hope this here walk will do good to his health; so we're a taken it easy."

"Both of you soldiers?" asked the farmer, gathering up his reins, preparatory to starting along the road they had come. "I see you both wear the uniform."

"Ye—yes, sir, we does; but only my boss, es you call him, sir, did really fight in the war. I was so old they wouldn't take me. But I wear the blue clothes for dress up, an' I've been in service for the cause. Yes, sir; though I never did carry a gun, I've done the best service I could for the cause." And then he pushed ahead beside Mr. Poindexter, and all along the "great meadow" country he never diverged in the slightest from the direct road, though they passed many a wooded ravine where the toothache cure might have grown. And the watchful black eyes noted with pleasure that they were entering the neighborhood of plenty and evident prosperity. Droves of fine cattle pastured in the rich meadow lands; herds of colts cantered up to the road sometimes, and then dashed free as birds over the great stretches of fields. The log cabins gave way to fine stone mansions, with cool shadowy porches running along them; and at each one of those pretentious dwellings Jubal was sure to stop on one pretext or another and always managed to learn, before leaving, if the inhabitants had any kinsfolks in the war and if they came through all right.

But when they reached the last range, and had left the fine plantations behind, and were once more in the region of wild lands and cabins—then at last,

Jubal grew discouraged. He had nursed the unrealized hope that somewhere on that fine big road to the laurel hills somebody in the great plantations would recognize Mr. Poindexter.

He had, however, very carefully refrained from mentioning to Mr. Poindexter that their walk had any special significance, beyond the search for herbs. They were each imbued with the idea that "some day" they would by chance walk up to some grand portal and be received with affection, and have a big dinner because the "master" had come back alive. This fantasy was Jubal's invention at the beginning, but Mr. Poindexter was calmly waiting the event, too.

And when they halted there to rest at the foot of the mountain, where a cold stream came tumbling out of the shadows, Jubal was sorely discouraged, and was wondering if another road could not be found on their return. And perhaps, on the other road——

But he built a fire, with the aid of a tinder-box and dry bark, and roasted a fine rabbit that Mr. Poindexter had killed with a stone, on which, together with some good wheat bread earned by Jubal for some trifling medicinal service, they made a very good meal. Afterwards, as they were resting in digestive laziness, a native of the country jogged down a dim pathway, and spoke as he passed.

"Took you for gypsies first sight I got of your fire," he remarked drawlingly. "I notice by your clothes you've been in the sarvice; whar might you hail from?"

"From down Maryland way, sir, and we're maken search for some special herbs for medicines," answered Jubal, while Mr. Poindexter nodded his head gravely.

"Well, there's most all kinds as grows in the mountains to be found on one side o' this hill or the other. But say, men, that creek water is pretty thin drinking; won't you just doctor it a little?"

And he swung a gallon jug from out a bag he was carrying; in the other end was some buckwheat, of which a few grains were slipping through a small hole.

"Whiskey?— no, I don't drink whiskey," said Mr. Poindexter with a kindly smile. "But Jubal!"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. Jubal certainly is geting old enough to feel the need of it sometimes, and I drink to youah very good health, sir. Now I tell you that surely does touch the right spot after a long tramp, though the water tasted good, too, when there was no better in sight. It's mighty cold water."

"And might well be," added the mountaineer, after a long swig at the jug. "Most o' the water is cold this side the mountain; some of it comes from springs in the ledges where ice is found till June. Yes, sirree; ice an' snow packed into the crevices till it settles into solid blocks, and there it stays through the spring."

"Does— does folks live near-a-bouts to it?" asked Jubal. But the man shook his head.

"No one nearer than a mile," he answered.

"There is a family about that near to it—an old woman and her gal; their name's Dorbett."

"Might I ask you, sir, if there'd be water birch trees close to where that ice and snow is—water birch and laurels?" asked Jubal—for surely, surely this was the land of the dream.

"Certain, more water birch and big laurel than anything else right along the ledges," said the stranger.

"Could we reach it to-day from here—is it hard to find?" and the mountaineer looked at him curiously, his eagerness was so plain.

"Well, if you want medicine herbs from along Snake-den ledge, you'd better get a guide, as you're a stranger," he remarked. "Not that it's so far, but that there's no way I could direct you from here. There is an old trail as used to lead past it; a trail they used to haul out mill-stones on, long ago, but no stranger could follow it. But I tell you; you just keep on this path for about two miles back, and it'll bring you where the widow woman lives that I spoke of, an' they'll likely show you the place. You can find the house, all right. Just keep on the plainest road all the way. There's a path through part of the ledge that would be a short cut, but it's risky to start you on that."

Mr. Poindexter had walked away along the stream and was whistling to an oriole fluttering just above him. The chatter of the birds had given him a quiet delight ever since the morning of that dream, and he never heard a new song that he did not at once try to imitate it.

He nodded when the stranger called good-day to him, and went obediently along with Jubal, who hastily gathered up their few traps and started up the shadowy path, up and up gradually, with ever the music of the mountain stream falling over the stones and the white sand a little below them.

There were so many birds. Everywhere they were calling, and Mr. Poindexter walked as briskly as a boy, and once, to the surprise of Jubal, he laughed aloud as one flame-colored songster was decoyed almost to his hand.

"I never did see so many pretty wild birds," said Jubal. But the other smiled and said, "I did, Jubal—in my dream."

They had passed several log trails leading to right or left, and cattle paths that wound and were lost again in the dense brush; but when they had gone about a mile Mr. Poindexter, who was a few steps ahead, turned to the right, where an ancient tree was marked by a "blaze," and where the dim signs of an old trail led.

"Hi! Where you marching? That ain't the road the man told us."

The other stopped and looked around in a puzzled way.

"I don't know what the man said, but I think this is the way to go," he responded, hesitatingly. It was the first time he had ever offered an opinion opposite to that of Jubal, and Jubal just sat down on a log and looked at him in astonishment.

"Now tell me, Mr. Malcolm, honey, how is it you

think that skimpy little path is the way instead o' this here plain one?"

But Mr. Poindexter put his hands to his head, and wrinkled his brows as though in pain.

"I can't tell why," he said despairingly, "only I do think this is the way to go."

And faithful Jubal made no further protest. Something in the air of the Laurel hills had changed Mr. Malcolm. He was at last something of the real leader, instead of a make-believe.

The place through which the trail led was a dense thicket of laurel; then the larger trees commenced, chestnut and white oak and rock-oak; and they walked over stones worn into ruts by wheels long ago. It was only by looking very closely that Jubal could detect those signs of ancient usage, for ferns grew to their waists along where moisture oozed from crevices in the natural stone paving. But Mr. Poindexter never seemed to look for signs of the trail. He was looking upwards where the birds flew here and there, and his feet were finding the way for themselves.

Then a wall grew gradually higher on one side of the trail—a wall of huge stone, above which the laurel grew and bent over towards them with long antlers, and the wall grew more and more massive, higher than tall houses it towered—sheer planes feathered green with rock-fern, and here and there great breaks where cavities had been quarried in some tremendous upheaval of nature; and all along the granite wall stood water birches ranged like

sentinels around a fort, their slim gray bodies towering high up above the dark green shadows of the laurel.

Mr. Poindexter fairly ran from one crevice to another, leaping upwards sometimes, where a foot rest was to be found, and peering down into the darkness of the great rifts. Once he slid down again to Jubal and carried a branch of the little laurel blossoms.

"You see it is just like the dream, Jubal; the rocks and the water birch and the laurel, and the ice is here somewhere I reckon. Put your hand to that slit in the rock; don't the air come through it cold as ice? You see it was a true dream."

A true dream! Jubal was dazed by its truth. He felt frightened when he looked at the eager face of the man who leaped like a squirrel up and down over those wild, dangerous crevices. Mr. Poindexter, laughing aloud, and calling to the birds, was a different being from the one he had served so long, and Jubal feared the excitement was simply madness; for the old man had always a secret dread that the old wound in the skull might bring about that result.

Then far in a cave-like aperture he heard a shout, and directly he saw the man running towards him with both hands held out.

"It's true," he called, "all true. Here is the ice and snow—how cold it is! Wagon loads are in there. It falls down from above, away back in there. Oh, it is nice to dream!" Then he paused and raised his wet, icy hand to his head in the way Jubal

was so used to seeing him do. A gesture of pain, and the pain always followed any attempt at earnest thinking.

"I wish, Jubal," he said at last, "that you would tell me if this is a dream now, or is this real and true?"

"Surely it's real an' true," decided Jubal. "Don't you mind, Mr. Malcolm, honey, that we jest come over here to make search for toothache root?"

"Toothache root? Oh, yes." And he gave a sigh of content, as though some perplexed thought was driven away by the mention of their prosaic errand. "It's here somewheres, ain't it? But ain't it too cold jest here by the rocks for it? Now, over that little hollow, the sun shines on that bank."

And again Jubal followed him, and found him, sure enough, digging the rare magical little plant, and holding up the white cane-jointed roots in triumph.

Jubal took the herbs with trembling fingers. He was old and tired, and all his hopes ending in this wild, rock-bound ravine, left him feeling weak and discouraged.

"Don't dig any more just now, Mr. Malcolm," he said, touching the other's arm with his hand. "We'll come another day, maybe, an' get the rest, for I certainly am nigh shakin' with a chill in this damp place. Don't you reckon we can find a path to get out into the clear woods right away?"

"Why, yes," and Mr. Malcolm picked up Jubal's bundle with his strong left hand and started ahead

without further ceremony. But after going a few rods he stopped in perplexity. "Jubal, we never hunted here before did we?" And his troubled eyes looked earnestly at the old man.

"No, honey, we never did, to my knowen."

"'Cause, it seems to me I've walked down here other times than this and it seems to me I can most tell what is down where this path goes."

"But there ain't a path," said Jubal. And then the other man stooped and parted the thick mass of ferns and showed that between the clumps was worn a narrow place reaching along both ways, and in a moist spot was left the impress of pig tracks.

"And it goes on down over the hill like that," said the discoverer with his eyes half closed, "and down there is a big creek and a pile of gray and black stuff they dug out of the coal from the old bank, an' then—but I can't tell any further now. Come, let's see if it's true."

It was true. The stream tumbled and brawled along noisily under the laurels and white honeysuckle bushes, and above, along the steep hill, was the debris from a coal mine, the mouth of which had caved in and had evidently been abandoned for years while slate and slack from it were strewn around to the fording place.

"Now what?" asked Jubal. "Where do you think the path goes from here?"

"I think it goes down the stream to where another little spring runs into it; and—and up that spring hollow is a clear place an'—a house. Jubal, what

makes me feel like this? We never did hunt herbs here before! I—I—"

But he walked ahead, giving Jubal no time to reply and no other words were exchanged. They reached the little stream where it joined the big one, and the path of the pig tracks led up along the little stream. He turned around and the blue eyes met the black ones, and seemed to question it all, as they turned around a knoll and were in front of a little log house, nestled snugly under the shadow of the mountain.

A little stumpy clearing reached up above it; some old untrimmed apple trees and sickly looking peach trees were scattered about at random; a sunbonneted figure was hoeing cabbage plants in front of the door, and when a little dog barked the woman raised suddenly and they could see she looked startled as well as surprised. She was a slouchy girl, with a pretty, listless face, and she stepped back nearer the door as the strangers approached. The white man dropped in the rear, and Jubal was again the spokesman.

"We hope you'll excuse us, Miss," he said, making a big bow with his hat in his hand. "My boss an' me are kind o' got out o' the right road an' strayed up here. We're both powerful tired, Miss, an' would like to ask a drink o' milk if you could spare it."

The young woman stared at them stolidly for a moment; strangers were things of wonder at their door.

"Where you from?" she demanded bluntly.

Jubal told her, and she softened a little when Mr. Poindexter closed his eyes wearily and leaned against the crooked plum tree by the path.

"Well, you can come in," she agreed ungraciously. "Your boss does look played out; is he sick?"

"He hain't never been right well sence war times, 'count of a hurt he got then; but he ain't right down sick, are you, Mr. Malcolm?"

"No, Jubal, only the sun felt hot on my head down there."

The young woman glanced at him. The light colored, curly beard, covering all his face, gave him the stout look of a farmer; and then he was such a tall, well-grown man, if only his face above the beard did not look such a bluish white.

"It was on the head he was hurt," explained Jubal, noticing her scrutiny. "Jest drink that milk, Mr. Malcolm; it's better for you than the spirits the man offered you to-day."

For she had gone to the little milk house only a few steps from the door, and carried in a jar of sweet milk, and handed them a tin dipper with which to help themselves.

"Mother wouldn't want me to let anybody go by hungry or dry if they wear the blue clothes you'uns do," she observed. "Mother is up on the mountain after bean poles. She gets a pension from the government for a brother o' mine that was killed an' we know two men about here that got pensions for hurts. Do you get a pension?"

She looked at the fair-whiskered man and he only shook his head and repeated, "A pension?"

"You see, Miss, we hain't been liven where folks knowed about pensions," said Jubal, quickly. "An as his folks are gone, an' he has been ailen, there jest warn't no one to manage it but me; an' the government ain't noways likely to pay much notice to an old colored man they wouldn't give a gun to; an' it takes a heap o' proven things in court to get a pension through, don't it, Miss?"

"'Deed it does," she assented. "Not thet it was hard for mother, cause Zach wasn't a common soldier. His general had made him an officer, so he was easier to keep track of. An' land sakes! How all the folks did laugh when word come that Zach was made some sort of officer. I wasn't growed up then, but I do mind how the other men an' boys made jokes over it, but not where mammy could hear them," she added. "For Zach wasn't an earthly bit o' good on the place. He nearly lived in the woods, an' was always letten' on to hunt catamounts over yonder in the ledges, or some other thing there was no use in, an' whistle to the birds till he could mock any one o' them jest as handy. Why, I mind how they set him out on a fence to watch the crows out o' the corn, an' stead o' driven them away he was mocken them just like they call till the ground was nigh black with them, an' when Dad—that was afore Dad died—when he went down there was the crows pullen out the little stalks to get the corn grain on the roots, an' there was Zach, pleased as could be, a sitten on the fence an' chatteren to them. An' thet was jest about as much useful work

as he ever did do; an' most folks jest counted it a blessen for Mam thet he was the one to be took 'stead o' the other boys."

"Then she had other sons, too?" asked Jubal, as he helped himself to more milk. "I s'pose these mountains sent out a right smart o' soldiers."

"Yes, indeed; Jim an' Joe—they're our two other boys—they was older than Zach, an' they listed in the first lot o' men thet went from the mountain. But they come back all safe. Joe, he's married an' works at the blacksmith trade down in the settlements; he's awful good company an' can play the fiddle. Now, Zach never was good company only for the birds. Joe would talk a heap to you about war times if he was here; but he ain't so steady as he might be, an' drinks a heap sometimes. An' Jim, he lives somewheres down the river—mostly on the boats I guess, an' he don't ever get up this way any more; so thet leaves jest Mam an' me here on the farm an' Zach's pension to keep us on. An' thet's why most folks count it a blessen for Mam thet he was the one to be made an officer, an' then took; for more pension is paid out for an officer than there is for a private soldier, you know."

As they sat about the milk jar and chatted, the girl seemed really glad to have someone to talk to, for visitors were scarce back there in the shut-in valley. She glanced often at Mr. Poindexter when talking as though wondering that he was not more friendly; Jubal drew what attention he could from him—for he indeed looked weary or ill, as he sat with his head leaned on his hand.

Then another little dog scampered in at the open door, and dropped, panting, beside the cupboard.

"Mam's comen," announced the girl. "She's sure to talk to you about Zach when she sees your soldier clothes. That's if she sees them, for her eyesight is getten bad now. She set a heap o' store by him, though he always was kind o' triflen, an' most the only thing he ever did for her was to get killed an' get her the pension. But we don't ever dare say thet afore her, 'cause he was her youngest boy, you know."

They heard the swish-swish of poles being dragged down behind the house, then around to the door, where they were dropped heavily. And a gray-haired little woman, with a sunbonnet on, straightened herself with an effort, and stood in the doorway.

"Who is it, Sally?" she asked, peering in and pushing off her bonnet to wipe her forehead with her apron. "Hev ye company?"

"Jest some strange men. They stopped in to rest an' get a swallow o' milk," explained her daughter. "Well, did you get the poles easy?"

"Poles wasn't any sort o' trouble, but I was flustered some by a young black snake. Lion killed it, but I was a leetle scared, for fear I'd step on another one, so I packed what I had down home. Where is Lion? Give him a pan o' that milk, Sally; he was a good dog."

Salley dipped some of the milk into a pan and gave it to the fat, panting little dog with the tremendous name, and as the old woman grew used to

the dark room she turned her attention again to the newcomers.

"Strangers — are you?" she asked. "What way be you bound for?"

"We —we're from south o' this, from down the pike, Maryland way. We allow to go back there again," said Jubal, and looked at his companion for some spoken word. But he, from the dark corner where he sat, was staring in a troubled way at the old woman and did not notice Jubal. The old woman peered forward.

"You're a black man, ain't you?" she asked. "Well —well—it's the first time a black man sat in our house. Not but you're welcome enough; my boys fought for them, an'one o' them died for them, an' it's as leetle as I can do to give them a cheer an' a drink o' milk; an' — an' ain't them soldier clothes?"

"Yes, mist'ess, they certainly is," agreed Jubal, "an' I'm a sure-enough black man; but my —my boss here, he's a white man; an' we both wear blue clothes 'case we both seen service."

"You'll excuse an ole half-blind woman for maken a mistake," she said, peering into the corner where Mr. Poindexter sat. "You're welcome, sir, stranger though you be, if only for the blue coat you wear. My boys was strangers once down your way. That's a long time ago; an' my Zach, he died down there amongst strangers. Maybe now you might a happened to know him, sir? He was color sergeant of the Sixtieth Ohio Regiment; an' he was killed

an' lost in the Potomac river in the springtime of 1862. His name was Zachary Taylor Dorbett."

"Zachary Taylor!—oh—"

Mr. Poindexter arose to his feet in the corner, and reached out his hand involuntarily. Jubal grasped it, and he sat down again. Sally was outside stacking the bean poles against the house, and the old woman did not see the movement of the stranger, or how quickly all his face changed. The perplexity in it was gone; it was all alight with understanding, as if some door long closed to him had suddenly swung open at the touch of a simple key.

"What did you say, sir?" queried the old mountain woman. "No? Well, I'm sorry. I'd like powerful well to meet some o' the men my boy led into that great battle they wrote me of. One o' his comrades, Mr. Clay Todd, he wrote me two letters an' told me how proud his company was of my boy. An' even his captain wrote me a letter himself when my boy was killed, an' said he never hoped to have a braver lad under his command. Yes, sir; they wrote me powerful pretty letters; but oh me! The fine words couldn't give my boy back to me!"

And she rocked to and fro on the little home-made chair, and the tears gathering thick in her eyes were wiped away with the gingham apron.

"He was only a boy, you know—my Zach," she continued, "maybe that's why I can't get reconciled. A boy nineteen seems mighty young to be shot down like that. But they wrote me he didn't suffer none. Jest dropped back dead

into the water when the bullet struck his forehead. He never was found, for the water washed him away; but he would a' been easy to identify, for a piece had been shot off his right ear, an' he had a bullet wound in his right arm."

She dwelt on these points with the sad persistence of one to whom they were daily food for thought, and did not notice that the stranger was looking remorsefully at his one shriveled arm that would never do a strong man's work again, and that his one hand crept up to pull forward the curled hair over an ear from which a circular bit was out.

"Still, I suppose I hain't as much call to grieve as some others," she continued with forced cheerfulness. "I had two boys left to me, an' the one that's gone had a chance to prove himself a man afore he was called, an' thet's a sort o' comfort, too. Then the government has done fair by me. They will provide for me the rest o' my days, an' send the money regular every three months. So Sally an' me, haven our own little bit o' land, too, manage to live more comfortable than we have for years back; an' that counts for a heap, when ye get along in years, jest to know that the coffee pot don't need to be empty, an' that ye can eat wheat bread all winter if so be ye want to."

"Yes, indeedy, that's true," agreed Jubal. "An' the government is mighty good about helpen when it can, I reckon."

"Yes—yes, it's good; but so were the men we sent to fight for it. Some hard-tongued folks say

the pension money makes me a better livin' than my boy Zach would have made for me. I don't know; he was only a boy an' not settled yet; but I do know if he could only walk up that path again, strong an' hearty like he used to be, I'd cheerful let the government folks keep their money—that I would."

The man in the corner half raised from his chair, but sank back again with a glance at his stricken arm. "Strong and hearty like he used to be? Never —never!"

"Sally, you come in an' get a bite airly, so these soldier boys can have a little supper afore they start out to the road again," called the old woman.

But Jubal, with a questioning look into Mr. Malcolm's face, protested.

"No, Mist'ess, youah mighty kind to strangers, but we've rested now, thank ye, an' must be travellen on. Mr. Malcolm, here, my boss, he's not been very well, an' I surely had to get him rested a spell. I reckon we won't be stayen longer, but thet milk was worth comen up here for."

"You're jest as welcome to a cup of coffee," she began. But the white man arose.

"No, ma'am—thanky, ma'am," he said hastily, in a voice new to Jubal, it was so hoarse and tremulous. "We can't stay, so don't bother. I'm sorry I didn't meet your boy down south. But that ain't curious. There was too many to know them all."

"Sally — Sally!" called the mother again. "Jest come in an' get the captain's letter about my boy. I'd like to have these men hear it;

it'll only take a minute," she added persuasively, "an' you might sometime come across folks as knowed him down there along the Potomac River. Sally can read it; she reads real good."

The two waited while Sally entered, and with scant veneration whipped a bundle of letters out of a cigar box over the clock and untied the string from about them.

"I could say them all off by heart jest as well as to open the papers," she said, with a shrug of her shoulders. "Mam does want them read so plagued often, an' every Sunday regular."

"Never mind, Sally; it does me good," said the old woman, rocking herself placidly, and eyeing with pride the several documents so important in her eyes.

"That's the one the captain sent," she said, pointing to a worn yellow envelope; and then the girl read aloud in a sing-song way an earnest letter of condolence to the mountain mother. It spoke of her boy as a young hero, "utterly fearless;" "brave enough to set an example of daring to the entire regiment;" "his heroism will ever be honored by every soldier who followed the colors he carried then." These and like expressions were penned there by an officer brave enough himself to honor the bravery of a subordinate.

And the old woman nodded her head to emphasize the sentence.

"That was my boy Zach," she said with a sad sort of pride. "He was a brave soldier—Oh, my Zach!"

She put her apron up to her face, and Mr. Poin-

dexter arose and walked out of the door pulling his hat low over his eyes. She and Sally looked after him curiously.

"He—he's lost some fren's too," explained Jubal hastily. "Don' you'ens think he ain't interested in youah trouble, cause he certainly is; but—well, he's lost some folks, too."

The old woman nodded: "I know then." She said softly, "He's a nice, big-looken man, ain't he?" Then she walked ahead of Jubal out to a little bed in the garden. Mr. Poindexter leaned against a plum tree and looked carefully over the poor little farm.

"Here's a flower bed I always call Zach's," said the old woman. "When we heard he was shot there was a girl over the hill cried nigh about as much as me. Her name was Caroline Dawes—we called her Carrie. She came over an' we fixed up this bed, jest as if he had been buried at home, ye know. She brought that pink rose an' planted it, an' I got that white, speckled stone from the ledge one day an' put it there as a sort o' monyment. An' after we got it all fixed up, Carrie often came here, an' we'd set out alongside of it an' talk about Zach. She died two years ago, an' is buried down in the settlement graveyard; but I jest hunted 'round till I found a stone to match the other, an' I planted another bush in the bed, a white one. So that it kind o' looks to me as if they both lay there, side by side, asleep. That's all I'll ever plant here, an' that white rose an' the pink has grown till their nigh meeten now."

"Yes," said the stranger, looking down on the two stones shining in the sunlight, and the two roses tossing their odorous bloom together. "I'm fond of flowers — specially roses; might I pick one?"

"To be sure you may—jest as many as you like," said the old woman, trying to look up at him, and failing because of the sun in her eyes.

He only took two — a pink and a white one.

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you kindly," he said, lifting his hat and taking a long look at her. "Come, Jubal."

He did not ask the road; he walked out of the forest as he had walked into it, without a guide; and he never halted until they reached the great road leading back to Maryland. Then he stopped and reached out his hand to Jubal.

"You are Jubal, anyway," he said—"good old Jubal! One of the things I'm glad about to-day is that I don't think I'll forget things again. I'll never forget what you've done for me."

"Shoo!" answered Jubal, glancing at his own blue clothes. "If I couldn't fight, I could try to help some that did; that is the onliest use I could be."

"My head aches, Jubal, an' I can't make out to think very clear; but I want you to tell me something—to tell me straight. Am I ever likely to be strong again—strong enough to work and keep anyone outside myself—strong enough to earn as much as that pension money?"

Jubal shook his head sadly, "You can't lift twenty pounds with that right arm, an' that hole in your

head is like to fetch on a fever any summer day you're forced into the hot sun. No, sir; you can whittle out a liven for yourself down there in our cabin, Mr.—Mr. Malcolm. But you haint got strength for 'sponsiblities."

The man buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud at his weakness. Jubal watched him with utter devotion in his old black eyes, and picked up for him the pink rose that slipped from his fingers.

"Mr. Malcolm—honey," he said, encouragingly, "don't you grieve so, an' don't you get weak in youah heart. That was a brave soldier the old lady tole us about back there. He was so brave they said he was a pattern for men to follow; so don't you forget that pattern, Mr. Malcolm; that's the man you must live up to all the rest o' your born days, honey."

The curled fair head nodded. He thrust the roses into the inner pocket of his coat and arose, pulling himself together with an effort.

"All right, Jubal," he said, "we're comrades then —boys in blue — the rest of our lives. Come, let us go home."

Then the black hand clasped the white one, and turning their backs on the fragrant hills of the laurels, they walked southward together.

They never talked of that one day on the northern mountain, or of that pensioner up there; and neither did their imaginations claim the fine 'plantations and carriages they passed. Illusions were over for Mr. Poindexter.

All that summer he whittled and shaped baskets and chairs and whistled early and late to the birds; but when the maples turned to flame color in the frosts he spoke often of the pain growing and growing in his head, and in his sleep he muttered of the ledge, and catamounts, of Carrie, and mammy, and the roses.

Then one day he could not rise and could not see because of the pain, and Jubal tramped to Piedmont for a doctor—a man conceded to be the best in that part of the state. But he shook his head when he saw the old wound and noted the mad fever.

"Has he any friends to send word to?" he asked. And Jubal answered, "No, sir—no one knows him now but jest me."

"Well, you're a faithful fellow," observed the doctor. "I would not mind having you with me as a nurse. If you ever want a place let me know. You've done the best that could be done with a wound like that. This sort of an end was sure to come sooner or later. The wonder is it did not come before."

"I'd got a doctor long ago, but I was afraid they'd go to cutten, an' kill him with their knives. I've seen such things in the war times, sir."

"And I too," muttered the doctor. "He was just as well left alone; it was only a matter of time. You're a good friend, Jubal."

"We was comrades," said old Jubal, proudly—"'Comrade' is what he called me, sir, when he was in his right mind, an' I ain't asken higher honor, sir."

"Who is the man?"

"A brave soldier, sir," said Jubal, with impressive reticence; and it was not until the doctor's roof had sheltered the faithful old fellow for many years that he told more fully the story that is told here.

And his words there by the bedside must have reached the ears of the man who was passing so swiftly out of their world, for he flung out his hand and laughed softly. "Give me the flag!" he gasped. "The general said—'A brave soldier.' So come, boys—Jubal—the colors are wanted—I am to take them—up front."

PERSEPHONE

In the first place, I did not want to go. It was all Jack's fault. We visited America that he might become acquainted with some of his father's relatives who live in Philadelphia. While there my little cough, which troubles me sometimes, seemed worse than usual, and Jack insisted that I should spend the summer in the Balsam Hills of Carolina, where the air, sifting through the firs, is said to carry with it healing for all lung troubles.

I objected until he put in a plea that I might go for his sake if not for my own, as he had been told that the scenery was well worth a visit, and was quite out of the beaten path of tourists. So, seeing that he was very anxious to make some sketches of the country before our return to England, I consented, with many misgivings, for my experience has taught me that when you attempt to make new paths, rather than follow the beaten ones of the tourist, you may make up your mind to put up with many inconveniences. But I have always humored Jack; so I went. I am his aunt.

On the evening of our arrival at that very peculiar hotel—or rather the one house in the straggling mountain village where they condescended to "keep folks sometimes," I heard the landlord tell his wife:

"There is two of 'em, a funny-looking little old maid, and a young man with some painted pictures. Reckon maybe he is goin' to try an' sell 'em through here. It's bringin' his pigs to a poor market. An' they want four rooms—so hustle around!"

The assertion of Mr. Snodgrass that I am an old maid is correct, and I always expect to be one. I am fifty-four years old, and I have no idea of changing the name I have borne so long.

Once, I had. It was thirty years ago. I had promised; but I broke my word and took off my engagement ring when I saw how my sister Betty, who was just seventeen then, would listen to Jack's voice, as if it were the only thing in this world worth hearing, when he came to spend the evenings with me. And when she came home from school, so tall and so very pretty, and Jack's eyes would look at her admiringly, as I knew they never could look at me—I was always plain—well, when I saw all this, which they thought no one noticed, I decided I did not want to get married, and I told Jack so. He did not say much. He only went away, and it was three years before he came back. He was a sailor, as his father had been before him. Betty was twenty when he returned, and had many beaux; but I had never known her to listen to any man's words as she had to Jack's—whom she often spoke of. So I sent for him to come and see me, and he came.

"Have you changed your mind?" he asked.

"Not this time," I said; "I settled in my own mind, three years ago, what was best for you and me. I will never change it."

"You are sure it is best?" he asked.

"I am sure," I answered. "I will marry no one. But you and I were boy and girl together, Jack. We must be friends still. And, some day, when you find a wife who cares for you as a woman should care for her husband, then you will say I was sensible.

"Then you never cared?"

"Not that way," I said, and laughed.

Betty came in while we talked, her face flushing with pleasure at sight of him. When he bade me good-night at the door, he said: "She is as pretty as ever. Even as a child I thought her one of the prettiest creatures I ever saw."

He said it carelessly, to hide his real feeling before me—as if I did not know!

I often invited him to come, and always left them together, until he saw plainly I approved their love affair And when Betty was twenty-two he came to tell me he was going to ask her if she would be his wife.

I suppose I was glad. I know I smiled and encouraged him, for duller eyes than mine could see that he was everything to Betty.

Soon after that they were married, and he took her with him for a year's cruise as a wedding trip, for he had his own vessel then. He named it Jeanne—it was his mother's name; it is mine, too.

I was glad they went away until I got used to the idea of Betty being his wife.

She never came back, for she died on ship-board, and he brought back a little babe, a boy, and carried it straight to me.

"I knew you could tell me what I had best do with it," he said.

"I can," I answered. "You can give it to me."

"To you? I could not burden you with the care of it."

"Is there anything in this world I would count a burden, if done for you?" I said, not thinking. You see the news of Betty's death and the child and all, brought so much into my heart that for a moment I forgot, and must have shown more in my voice than he had suspected in all the years since I told him I could not marry him, for he grew quite white, and looked at me steadily.

"I may never come back," he said, at length. "If I don't, will you see to the child? He will have money, but no love unless you give it to him. I shall always think of him as he is now, with your arms around him. It is a picture I shall never forget. And now, good-by!"

Then he left me there with the boy, and I never saw him again. He died of yellow fever, two years later, so that the child became all my own. I called him Jack, after his father, and I have tried always to be mother and father, both, to him.

So that is the sort of relationship between my

boy and me, and explains the importance in my eyes of all things pertaining to him. He is a good boy, and was twenty-five that summer in America.

Since a child he has been ambitious to be a painter, and people who know much more than I do have told me he is sure to make a name in art, if he lives. So I let nothing stand in the way of his desires, and used to travel with him to many of the places where it was necessary for him to go to study.

For two years we were in Italy, and he says he is going back next year; but lately my cough, though trifling, has seemed to tire me too much to take long journeys; so I don't hope to go with him again. And he will miss me sorely, I am afraid, for he never seems to think of having a wife for a companion. To ladies he is carelessly gallant, and has always been a favorite with them. But I have never seen in his acquaintance with any the least indications of serious intentions. When I have broached the subject, he has laughed and said:

"I keep all my love for you, Auntie Jeanne. You and I will be a jolly old maid and old bachelor together."

But I began to tell about our stay in America. I may be laughed at for my pains—I have no doubt I shall be thought an imaginative old woman—but I maintain that what I am going to narrate was a very peculiar coincidence.

Our rooms at Mr. Snodgrass' were far from luxurious, the house-furnishing being rather primitive,

but Jack was in ecstasies. He likes "roughing it," as he calls it, and before we had been there two weeks he had a great many sketches and studies for finishing later. The only drawback to his enjoyment was his fear that I might be lonely when he was away all day, as he often was. I thought I could pick up a maid or companion there, but found it was not so easy. Our landlady had two daughters who offered their services—which I declined. They were both very yellow, with straight sandy hair and vacant faces. I am old and ugly myself, but I like to have youth and grace about me.

"Don't you see any pretty girls in your rambles?" I asked Jack one morning, when the sight of the funereal peaks of the Balsam Mountains were beginning to seem oppressive by their changeless darkness. The valleys below them were beautiful, but I could see nothing of those from my window; our stopping place was too far up the mountain.

"None that you would want around you," said Jack. "You are hard to please, Auntie Jeanne, but I will keep my eyes open for you. I will ask some of the natives."

In the evening he came home jubilant

"I have got track of one at last," he said. "I have made lots of blunders in this queer neighborhood. One man down the mountain said he would ask his daughters if they knew of anyone. I suggested that one of his daughters might be willing

to come herself, when he froze me by the information that I had made a mistake, sah. He was a Southern gentleman whose family had never yet been under master or mistress, and could not begin now, sah. Well, auntie, I saw the wife and daughter of the Southern gentleman a little later. They were both barefooted, but they invited me in as ceremoniously as if they wore regal robes for the reception of visitors. I am sorry you can't climb over the hills with me and see more of the people. There are such queer types among them. The most extreme poverty does not prevent them welcoming a newcomer as if they were sovereigns giving a traveler the freedom of their territory."

"But what of the girl?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. Well, she has been keeping a little school near here, and has just closed it. An old darkey told me of her —says she is mighty pert-looking, and has an education. She has to make her own living, and he thinks she would come. She lives near the log school-house on the county road. You can drive there in the morning. Her name is Percy Atkins."

In the morning Jack had left for the hills before I was up, so I went alone. When I told Mrs. Snodgrass I wanted her son to drive me to Miss Percy Atkins' after breakfast, she tossed her head in a peculiar manner. No doubt she divined my errand, and resented it as a slight on her own daughters.

"Oh, very well, marm, very well," she said, and

as she closed the door between the dining-room and kitchen I heard her say: "*Miss* Percy Atkins! *Miss* Percy Atkins, indeed!"

I found the house a very small, very old, and very pretty stone cottage almost hidden from the road by the thick growth of pine trees in front of it. A neat-looking black woman came out and asked me to "Light, and walk in."

I did so and found the little sitting-room very tasteful in its furnishing, or rather in the arrangement of the furniture, much of which was entirely too elegant and imposing for such close quarters, although it all seemed very old. The carpet was made from rags, but the table and a huge sideboard were of carved mahogany. Some rudely framed water-colors were very good. A guitar lay on the table. Bright bits of color, in the way of flowers in old-fashioned cut-glass goblets, were in every available nook, and in the corner-bracket decorated with pine cones were several books, all well worn, which from the binding and brown tinge of the leaves looked as if they had served more than one generation of readers.

While the woman went to call Miss Atkins, I sat down in an old-fashioned straight-backed chair, and looked around me with a sense of pleasure in the thought that I might get as companion the girl who evidently had arranged the flowers, and whose taste had done so much to redeem all that heavy furniture from stiffness.

The woman had scarcely left the room when I heard voices outside the window—a man's and a woman's.

"I tell you, I don't allow to wait much longer; 'tain't no use!" said the man.

"Two months more, that is not long," and the pleading voice was soft and very sweet. In that moment I fell in love with the owner.

"It is that much too long," growled the man; "you promised your mother it should be before this."

"If I hadn't promised her——"

"You would try to draw back now," broke in the man fiercely, "but you can't. You swore to your promise, and it's a promise to the dead. You seemed willin' enough then." Then more gently: "And you will be again, honey. It's just the learnen and the study that's weaned you away like; that will all come right when you get up there on the mountain with nothen else to think of. And I will be so good to you!"

"You are too good and patient with me, Hen—a great deal too much so."

"Pshaw! No I ain't. I get riled sometimes when you seem as if you want to draw back; but it's all over in a minute. I am goin' now, good-by, honey; and don't forget what you promised your mother. I'll be back in two months. Good-by."

Then I heard them both walk away, and directly afterward the black woman spoke to someone in the little hall.

"Miss Perse, where on yeth you been? I was looken all ovah the house fer yeh. Here's a lady to see you—some quality, too. Here's her keerd. Fix up a bit fore you go in. Ye look awful pale to-day. You's always pale enough—de Good Man knows!"

"Never mind, Cassie," said the soft voice. "It doesn't matter how I look, I suppose. I must not keep the lady waiting."

Then Cassie opened the door.

"Here is Miss Perse, now; couldn't find her nowhars afore," explained that personage, with a freedom you never find in an English servant. Her mistress did not check her, but seemed to take it as a matter of course.

One of the peculiarities I noticed in that country was the familiarity of the colored servants, which scarcely seems the impertinence it would be with us.

The girl she ushered in was more than pretty—she was beautiful; slightly above medium height, her figure was perfectly proportioned; her hair was black with an inclination to waviness; her features were regular, and, though pale and a little sad in expression, the face was a singularly attractive one. Her skin was clear and creamy, with just that hint of olive which makes the women of Spain so attractive to us Northern people. But these outlines

tell but little; there was inborn grace in the round girlish form which was clothed in a cheap gray dress made tight and plain. A scarlet lily of the swamps was in her belt. Her hands—a so-called test of blood—were slender and white. The brown eyes were slumbrous and dreamy, and matched the voice, which said:

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, madam. I was outside when you arrived, as Cassie has told you. You wish to see me?"

I was half-ashamed to propose to this queenly looking creature that she should read to and amuse me in return for a salary. I was afraid of making the mistake Jack had made with the Southern gentleman. But finally I managed to tell her.

Her face brightened for a moment, and then fell.

"I should like to go very much, madam"—I noticed she did not say "marm" as most of those people do there—"but I am afraid it will be impossible."

"Laws, hon'! Why not?" interrupted the officious Cassie. "Yeh kin ef yeh oney think so. I'll tend to the place yer all right. It's just what yeh need, child. Yeh gitten so pale and peaked this summer; it'll chirk yeh up a bit to go whar they's folks fitten fo yeh to talk to. Jest yeh make her go, ole miss. It 'ud brighten her up powerful."

"I should like to have you, Miss Atkins, if you can come," I said, fearing that, after all, my ride down the mountain was to be in vain. "I am a

stranger in your America, and an old woman who will not require much labor from you—only to read to me sometimes, or drive me over these mountain roads, that I may see some of the beauties of which my nephew tells me. And I wanted someone for a companion who was a native of the country, and knew the hills."

"Which the Lawd knows she do," broke in Cassie, who was sitting on a stool near the door, making a grotesque picture in a blue cotton gown and a red scarf or kerchief about her hair, which made a glowing frame for her shining ebony countenance. "She's run through these pine woods evah sence she was big enough to walk. Reckon I ought to know; I've nursed her an' tended her sense she was a little pickaninny that high,"—she held her hand about six inches from the floor—"an' she jest lubs dem mountains, rain or shine, a'most as much as she do her ole mammy."

The girl looked at her with a great kindness in her eyes.

"Not quite so much, Cassie," she smiled. "Neither the mountains nor anything on them could ever be so much to me as my mammy."

The queer black creature's face fairly shone with delight. She dropped from the stool to the girl's side, taking the white hand in her black ones, patting it, and rubbing her cheek against it as a cat does with the hand it loves, while she murmered broken, disjointed pet names, such as "my own pickaninny,"

"my chile," "my honey." I really have never seen anything equal to the slavish adoration expressed in every motion and glance of that black savage.

"Cassie! Cassie!" said the girl chidingly, but with love in her voice, "remember we are not alone. If you are a foreigner, madam," she said, turning to me, "such an exhibition of affection may seem strange to your eyes, although you will meet it often in the South. Our blood has not the chill of the Northern winters in it."

Someway it jarred on me to hear her say "our blood" in speaking of a slave's weakness. Of course they tell me the blacks are not slaves now; but they have been, and it is all the same.

"I hope you will consider the matter and promise to come," I said, as I arose to go. "I will endeavor to have a pleasant room made ready for you, but it will not be the picture this one is; that would be impossible in our bare hotel. And as to salary, I am willing to pay whatever you consider sufficient for your time."

"I should like to go," she said. "There is so little one can do here when school is over, and it pays but little. The change would be very welcome to me, more so than I can tell you, and I am too poor to refuse a chance of earning the money you offer. I will try to come."

"Ef yo' had yer rights yeh wouldn't need to take hire from none—'deed she wouldn't, miss," asserted Cassie.

"Cassie!"

The girl's voice was not raised higher than before, but the woman seemed to recognize in it the mistress instead of the pickaninny, for she said humbly:

"I axes yer pardon, Miss Perse, 'deed I does."

"If I find I can go I will send Cassie to tell you this evening, Miss Henderson," said the girl as she walked to the very rickety equipage and assisted me into it. The driver lay under a tree nearby, and saw me comfortably settled in the carriage before he moved toward it.

"Try to come, my dear," I said as he gathered up the reins. "I like fresh young faces about me, and yours would charm away much dreariness from our rooms on the hill."

The driver yelled at the horses and cracked his whip so that I could not hear her answer, but she smiled and waved her hand to me, and when we reached a point far above from where I could again get a glimpse of the house, I saw her still standing there, her hands clasped behind her head, looking up as heedless as a young eagle of the heat and glare of the sun in her eyes.

That evening Cassie came carrying a basket of flowers covered with cool wet leaves—"With Miss Perse's compliments, an' she'll come," she said exultantly, "an' I tell you I'm mighty glad of it."

"So am I, my good woman," I answered, as I lifted off the leaves and found under them the fragrant lavender of heliotrope, and pink of sweet brier, and great, velvety, yellow roses on a bed of wet moss.

'Oh, if Jack were only here to see this before it fades," I said involuntarily.

"I'll bring them up every day, seein' yer so fond of 'em," said the woman; "reckon I'll have to anyway. This place looks mighty bar' like. Miss Perse 'll miss her garden a heap up here. Reckon I'd better bring em up every mawnen?"

While the woman waited I interviewed our landlady about an extra room.

"Who fer?" she asked.

"For my companion, Miss Atkins."

"We hain't got no rooms to spar," was the curt answer.

"Then my nephew must see about getting rooms for us somewhere else," I said quietly. This answer seemed to change her mind.

"Well," she said, "I'll see what we can do. I'll speak to him about it." Directly she came back. "He says you'ens can hev the west room offen the porch thar, either fer the young man's fixens er fer Miss Atkins."

Pen can not describe the superciliousness in her voice as she spoke the girl's name. Cassie must have heard it, for she hesitated about going, even after she had said good-by, and finally she said:

"I don't like to 'pear noways 'ficious, case Miss Perse wouldn't like it nohow; but if these yer yallerheaded white trash try to make my little missie mis'able while she's yer, I hope yeh'll either sot down on 'em or else send her home. Ef she had her rights they'd be taking off their hats to her, an'

see'n's she haint, they try to make it hard for the child to make a decent liven among 'em. I hope yeh'll excuse me fer speakin. I jest couldn't help it, even if Miss Perse is mad. She don't never like no one to mention her rights er wrongs."

"She shall hear nothing of them here, I promise you," I said, touched by the creature's devotion.

"Thank you kindly fer that promise," she said earnestly; "and may the Good Man bless yeh if yeh help her to be a little happy."

She was really the most extraordinary creature. I was always afraid to speak kindly to her, for fear of one of the outbreaks I had witnessed in the little house among the pines; but she never inflicted them on me, for which I was thankful.

Jack was pleased when he came home in the evening, and learned that I had been successful; but he laughed at my decided admiration for Percy. I told him of the girl's home, our conversation, and our landlady's evident dislike of her.

"Jealousy, auntie; that is it," he said. "She doesn't like it, because you were not satisfied with her lanky daughters of the leathery complexions and black teeth. I wondered at that general style of beauty through here, until I became acquainted with their steady diet of salt pork, corn bread, and black coffee. Then I wondered no more; but, as long as we can get fried chicken, flaky biscuits, and clear honey from them, I won't quarrel with our Carolina fare, especially since noting the benefit

this balsam-laden air has been to your lungs. And if your paragon comes to-morrow to keep you company, I am going up on Old Balsam for a day or two. I have a guide who will go for twenty-five cents a day and carry his own bacon."

"Bacon?"

"Provisions. The man said 'bacon,' but I suppose he will have something besides that."

I tried to persuade him not to go; or, at any rate, not to sleep out on the hills. I was so horribly afraid of him being snake-bitten. You see, in all the accounts I had ever read of the southern part of the United States, serpent stories bore a prominent part. In fact, the numerous stories of those terrible objects which reach us through the American papers have always been a source of wonder and terror to me. But Jack laughed at the remembered horrors which I recounted.

"There is no danger, auntie," he said. "They tell me neither copperhead nor rattlesnake is seen among the balsam woods. The snakes won't go higher than four thousand feet, and the balsams don't commence below that altitude, so I am safe. Besides, they say there are men who live up on those heights, and do not come down or see the face of a human being for months at a time. I am anxious to see how they live."

"At what can they work on those heights?" I asked.

"Some of them are charcoal-burners, others work the scattered mica mines, while others live still

higher up the mountains, and have kilns, where they gather and clarify the pitch which they collect at certain seasons from the balsam. It must be a terrible life, buried in that blackness which seems to lie over those hills like a pall."

"Jack, dear," I said, as he was gathering up his painting materials to move into the west room. "Jack, is it customary among these people for penniless working girls to keep their own servants? I never have seen it anywhere else; but this girl told me plainly that she was too poor to lose a chance of earning money; yet she keeps her little home, and at least one servant."

"Who, no doubt, asks no wages, and does outside work besides, rather than see a member of a former master's family in poverty, or in need of a slave's service. You see many such cases of devotion among those negroes, strange as it may seem to us. Say, auntie, where had I better put this? I wish I had left it behind. I have lost interest in it."

The thing referred to was a three-quarter figure of Persephone, in a half-finished condition.

"I am sorry for that, Jack," I said. "I know how hopeful you have been of that subject."

"So I was. I never did have anything take such a hold on my mind as my conception of Persephone. I studied over it, dreamed over it, and had hopes of it in some way making a marker for me; but with three models I have tried and failed to accomplish what I want. I can't get the spirit of the thing.

It falls flat. Sometime I may find the face I want. Until then I shall not touch it, though the thing haunts me in some way, or I would not have carted it over here. Oh, for such luck as Thorneycroft's! Haven't you heard the story of his Artemis, auntie—that perfect figure with the deerhound close beside? Well, the sculptor had got to that part of his work where he required a hound for a model. That day a beautiful deerhound came to his door, and utterly refused to leave. It was exactly what he wanted, so he used it as a model, and made inquiries about its owner. None could be discovered, and on the night of the day the model was finished it died. Now, what more reasonable than to suppose that the goddess sent a spirit in the shape of the hound to serve that purpose, and recalled it when the model was finished to her satisfaction. Why can't the gods favor us equally, and send me a model as well?"

"For mercy's sake, Jack," I said, "don't talk such heathenish nonsense."

"Is it heathenish? Well, let us hope that some day my model will come to me, even if from heathendom; or perhaps I shall find her among the snuff-chewers of these mountains." And he went out laughing at the idea.

At once the thought came to my mind of the girl down among the pines. There was the somber light of hopelessness in her eyes, except when she smiled; and surely there was beauty, grace, and pride enough in her face and form to make her an artist's model for the Queen of Hades!

In my quiet way I was elated. Perhaps I had at last found what he wanted. But I said nothing. I remembered a former occasion when I thought I had found him a Hebe, and was in ecstasies over her pink and white prettiness, when Jack cooled my ardor by telling me she was "beefy"—a horrible expression; the young men have so many nowadays—and I vowed then never to hunt for models again. So I kept quiet, and bided my time.

In the morning I got Jack to send Hugh, our landlord's son and man-of-all-work, after Miss Atkins. There was a little demur on Hugh's part. I heard him over the veranda, growling to his mother through the kitchen window.

"Blamed ef I'me agoin' to wait on her, an' drive her 'round. Why don't you tell her?"

"I don't allow to do no such a thing!" It was Mrs. Snodgrass' high-pitched voice. "She comes here with her hifalutin idees, and thinks plain-spoken white folks ain't fitten for 'em to talk to. So jest let her find her company whar she pleases. She's welcome to, fer all o' me. I don't allow to give no advice, and don't any of you'ens dar to—you hear me! Hugh, you go and hitch up them creeturs this minute. Alviny, go an' kill one o' them Dominakys fer dinner. Reckon yeh'd better kill two; that young painter chap eats right smart. It's mighty little we'd make off them if it wasn't for the lot of rooms they pay fer."

I did not exactly understand the remarks I overheard, and did not exactly care to. Miss Atkins

was intelligent, and would suit me as a companion. She was beautiful, and might be what Jack wanted as a model. She was evidently a lady, and I was inclined to think with Jack, that Mrs. Snodgrass' dislike to her arose from jealousy.

"I am going around the point there to see if I can get some fish in the pools of that mountain stream," said Jack, as the lumbering carriage creaked down the hill. "I shall be back in time for dinner, and suppose I shall find your newly discovered treasure in complete possession of you. Don't fall in love with her and forget me! Good-by."

He waved his hat to me from the road when he saw me watching him through the window. He seemed so full of the happiness of youth and strength that it did my old eyes good to look at him. In my opinion he is handsomer than any of the pictures he paints—with his six feet one, his straightforward, level-looking blue eyes, and his catching smile. I sat there, watching him, thinking how good it is to have youth and know its worth, as Jack seemed to do, for often when I have scolded him for working too hard he has said: "It is now or never, auntie. If I don't make a marker for myself while I am young the chances are that I never shall. I see so many lose ambition as they find the years gaining on them."

I was thinking of this as my eyes rested on his tall figure swinging down the road.

"Yeh'd better not do that!" said a voice at my elbow. I turned with a start. Behind me was the bilious-looking girl, Alviny, with some towels.

"Better not do what?" I asked sharply.

"Yeh'd better not watch him out o' sight. It's a sartin hoodoo."

"A what?" I asked. I actually began to think the girl was insane. She always made me nervous, with her vacant yellow face and monotonous voice, in which there was never heard a varying note.

"A hoodoo—bad luck, yeh know. Ole black Marm Hepsey says it's a sartin hoodoo to watch anyone out o' sight. They don't never come back the same."

"For mercy's sake don't talk such superstitious nonsense," I snapped. "Hoodoo, indeed!"

"I've heerd more folks an' you make light o' the same thing, but they never gained much luck from it, as ever I see."

"There, that will do. You can leave the towels," I said, and felt relieved when she sidled out of the room.

Cassie came with my new companion, carrying her little wardrobe, which I noticed was of the cheapest, and insisted on "Miss Perse" allowing her to arrange the things on their pegs in the little bedroom.

"Jess yo' sot still, chile," she commanded, "an' lem me 'lone. I reckon yeh'll have to wait on yerself an' ole miss, too, while you's heah—but not till I go."

The girl wore a plain, tight-fitting dress of reddish delaine. On anyone else it would have been hideous. On her it was just the thing I should want Jack to see her in. It looked like dull-red flame with the girl's

dark face above it —the best possible thing for Persephone.

"That will do, Cassie," she said to the woman, who was smoothing out the poor dresses and spending all the time possible on her duties. "You had better go now. Be careful of the garden, and attend to the young chickens. I hope you will not be very lonely."

"Lor' bless yeh, honey, I'll have too much to do to be lonesome, an' Ill tend to them thar chickens same as yo'self. An'—an'—I can come up sometimes to see yeh, I reckon, an' bring ye flowers, er anything yeh may want?"

The girl looked at me questioningly.

"Certainly," I said. "No doubt your mistress will need to see you often about her household affairs."

"Thank yo' kindly, miss. You's mighty co'siderate like; an' it seems hard fer her old mammy to leave her fer long at a time. This night 'll be the fust since she was bawn that she evah slep' 'thout me aside her bed. But we'll have to get used to it sometime. I spect the time is a-comin' when we can't alles be together. Good-day to you, miss. Good-by chile; good-by, honey! The Good Man bless yeh an' keep yeh safe fer yer ole mammy."

The girl stooped and kissed the black cheek in good-by, as she said:

"As long as I live I will want you near me, Cassie. No other will love me so well."

She threw a kiss to the woman as she passed under the window, but she did not watch her out of sight.

I wondered if she had heard of "hoodooing." I began to wish Jack would return. That corpse-like girl had said people never came back the same. I actually began to be anxious for him to reappear.

The girl arranged flowers she had brought in goblets and a large water-pitcher. In some way her very presence seemed to add charm to those bare rooms as she moved about.

Looking over some books I had brought, among which were some late magazines, she turned to me smiling:

"Have you any idea, Miss Henderson, what a world-forgotten nook you have come to for your summer? This is the first magazine I have seen within five years. I can not afford to subscribe for them, and I know no person in this neighborhood who reads anything beyond an old newspaper now and again."

"I am glad, then, to be able to give you a treat," I answered, "as Jack has quite a number with him, and will get more."

"Jack?"

"My nephew, Jack Hilyard. I expect him back soon to dinner, and in the meantime, Miss Atkins, will you not read a little to me? Make your own selections."

"Miss Henderson," the girl said, looking not at me, but across me, "if you had brought a maid with you, what would you have called her if her name had been Ellen Smith?"

"What a question? Ellen, I suppose. Why?"

"Because I would rather have you consider me the same, and call me by my first name. I am seldom called Miss Atkins, and much prefer the other. Besides, it seems best so."

"Just as you please, my dear," I said. "I am sure I shall be glad to call you Percy. It has a masculine sound. Is it a family name? I used to know Percys."

"No," she said, raising the blind a little to let in more light for her reading. "It is merely short for—— What a strange picture!"

Raising the blind had let in a flood of light to the corner where Jack had set the easel with his Queen of Hades. As the girl turned, it was facing her, and then I understood what Jack meant when he said it was "flat."

The picture face looked sullen by contrast with the human one opposite it. She was standing half-turned from the window, her hand still on the curtain, with her face half in light, half in shadow. A ray of sunlight glimmered through the folds and lay blood-red over her arm and shoulder. She stood gazing at the painting, her brown eyes changing as she seemed to dimly understand the subject. I sat watching the picture she made with the light and the shadow about her. She drew a long breath and asked: "What is it?"

"A painting by my nephew on a mythological subject—Persephone."

"Persephone!" she echoed. "I thought that must be it. That is my name."

"Persephone!"

But this time it was Jack's voice in the doorway. I turned and saw that he, too, had been watching the living Persephone. He crossed the room with quick strides, passing my chair as if he did not see me, and stood beside her.

"I have found you at last," he said eagerly. "Persephone!"

"Jack!" I cried.

The girl stood quite still, her head thrown back in a startled way, her eyes on his, while her face grew white. At that moment I had faith in hoodooism. Assuredly, Jack had come back not the same.

"For mercy's sake, Jack!" I repeated.

Then he seemed to remember proprieties.

"How unpardonable of me," he said, half laughing. "I beg you will forgive me, though I fear I can scarcely explain to your satisfaction the cause of my rudeness. Auntie, you must help me."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," I said crossly. "Such rudeness is inexcusable. Percy, child, come here to me. Don't look so frightened."

She came and sat on a low chair beside me.

"I am not frightened," she said.

Her hand lay on the arm of my chair. I touched it with mine. It was icy cold.

"Not frightened," I said, "and your hands cold and trembling. Jack, until you avow yourself thoroughly ashamed and promise never again to so far forget yourself, I shall refuse to introduce you."

"I am very penitent, and will promise anything," he said, stooping to kiss my hand in mock contrition. My hand held hers. He must have touched it, for she drew it away half shyly.

"Percy," I said, "this is my nephew, Jack Hilyard, whose eccentric, impulsive manner just now I hope you will try to overlook. Jack, this is Miss Atkins, who is to remain with me during my stay."

"And for whom I shall try to redeem the bad impression I have evidently made," he said. "Will you not shake hands, Miss Atkins, and begin our acquaintance by trying to forgive me?"

She arose and reached out her hand to him.

"There is nothing to pardon," she said with stately courtesy, her solemn brown eyes looking at him levelly, with no trace of consciousness or coquetry in her manner, for which I was thankful; for, under the circumstances, a vain girl, or a designing one, might have taken advantage of such a strange entrance as Jack's. I was glad to see my opinion that she was a lady, indorsed by her manner. A little later Alviny came to tell us dinner was ready.

"Come," I said to her, as Jack went to change his coat.

"With you?" she asked. "I had better wait, had I not? To you I am only a servant."

"Nonsense," I said. "You are my companion, and I will not have you get such ideas into your head. I am no grand lady, but a very plain, unassuming old woman, who looks after her own house-

keeping when at home. But Jack lets me remain there so little lately that I am growing quite a stranger to King's Lynn, and am getting to be almost as much of a vagabond as himself. Not another word about your station as a servant. Come along."

And so began our acquaintance with Persephone, for that was what we grew to call her. Before her first week with us was over Jack had broached the subject of her sitting as his model.

"Are you willing?" she asked me.

"It is what I most wish for, my dear," I said. "If you consent I am sure he can accomplish what he has hitherto tried in vain."

"You think he cannot do it without me?"

"I do not think he can do it so well without you. When he first saw you he recognized his ideal of Persephone. You remember?" I asked.

"Yes, I remember," she said, "and I will be glad to be of use to him. I think I understand now why I was called Persephone."

It was certainly a strange remark to make, but the girl herself seemed strange to me at times. She became so necessary that I wondered how I had ever managed to do without her. She read in her soft, melodious voice; she drove me over the hills, every shady nook of which she seemed to know, every spring where the water was clearest and coolest, every call of the birds or haunt of the squirrels, which we would startle with the creak of

our carriage. More than once we stopped at the little house among the pines. At such times the delighted Cassie always had some johnny-cake and honey, or corn-bread and sweet butter and milk to offer us, and would fill our arms with flowers, of which there was a profusion.

"They take up but little room," Persephone explained one day, as we returned to the carriage laden with sweet-smelling blossoms, "and we have garden enough left to raise all we can find market for here; and even for that and our chickens we have to take flour, meat, and such things. It is seldom that we get any money for them unless Cassie takes them to Wayneville; but it is too far to send her there often."

"It is a dismal life for you," I said. I had always avoided speaking of her life, feeling, from Cassie's words, that it might be unpleasant for her.

"It was not so until my mother died, four years ago. Since then it has seemed dreary, often."

It was the first time I had ever heard her mention her mother.

"You are, no doubt, much attached to the place," I said. "People generally are to their birthplace."

"But this is not the place of my birth," she answered. "I was born in Sicily."

"How strange to find a Sicilian-born creature in these wilds. But you are not Sicilian?" I asked.

"I? Oh, no. My parents were traveling in Europe, and by a series of unforeseen delays they

were compelled to remain some time in Sicily. While there I was born, near the spot where mythology tells us Persephone was seized and carried to Hades by her dark lover. The story told to my mother, amid those peculiar surroundings, made a decided impression on her mind, so much so that it influenced her choice of my name. But my stay in Sicily was short, as we returned here to Carolina almost immediately after my birth."

I rode home in silence. I never was superstitious, but a decidedly uncanny felling had taken possession of me. Could such a condition of affairs be merely a coincidence, or was it a case similar to that of the deerhound that came to Thorneycroft? Would she disappear when the picture was finished? Had the goddess sent her? These, and a dozen other conjectures, had taken possession of my foolish old head, put there by Jack's wild vagaries. I longed to continue the conversation, but the girl's manner did not invite further inquiry. She sat silent, gazing over the precipice above which we were driving, down to the roof of her little house, discernible among the trees. She had lost much of her sad expression after coming to me. There was more color in her face. Her eyes were less somber, and she had in some way lost much of her still, stately repose, and at times was restless and changeful in her moods, but always charming to me.

I don't know what she was to Jack in those days. Sometimes I thought she was merely an odd type

of woman that he was fond of studying in his careless, philosophical way—just as he would have done had he been a physician and she a subject calling for delicate, intricate analysis. He had known many handsome girls, but, outside his art, that was the only interest I ever knew one to awaken in him.

I say sometimes I thought that—and then again I don't know.

He would tell her tales of our foreign journeys, and watch with amusement her expressive face portraying her sympathy, her wonder, her delight, at the many incidents of travel, risk of adventure, or description of old-world beauties. He laughed at her for the intense interest she would show at the slightest thing he told her. He remarked to me once that she seemed like one whose mind had been closed to all knowledge of the world, so eager was her desire for learning in all things. He would listen to the mournful negro songs she sang sometimes in the evenings, with her guitar as accompaniment, and sketch her in innumerable attitudes, besides the Persephone he had commenced of her. He spent most of his time in his room, working. The sketches of mountain scenery he had come for were neglected.

"You might as well have returned to King's Lynn," I said, half-vexed with him for dragging me among those hills to rough it, when he could have had so many more conveniences in our little English home—the house Betty and I were born in.

"You forget my Persephone, auntie," he said. "I would never have found her in King's Lynn. I think fate sent us here."

And sometimes I think it did.

"But don't call her your Persephone," I said; "she might hear you."

"Well, she is mine, is she not?—or, rather, ours? You and I discovered her. She has been resurrected for my picture, and I claim her," he said, stepping back to get a better view of the drapery he was touching up. He was thinking only of his work. To him she was his Persephone, that was all—never a woman. He irritated me sometimes with that sort of carelessness, and just then, especially, for through the open window I saw the girl's gray dress on the veranda without, and feared she had heard him.

"For mercy's sake, Jack," I said, "if you forget everything else, try and remember that Persephone ate the pomegranate and returns whence she came when the leaves fall."

"But my picture will be finished then," he said, and laughed a little at my earnestness.

Another laugh followed his—a low, mirthless one—as the girl stepped through the low window.

"Whence she came, Miss Henderson!" she repeated; "that was Hades, was it not? But that does not matter, so long as the picture is finished. I am ready now, Mr. Hilyard, for the sitting."

Her face was a little pale, her voice a little metallic, and her lips were drawn closely together. I saw

that she had heard. Jack, the stupid, saw nothing as he placed her to his liking, except that her face was what he wanted.

"So!" he said, looking at her critically; "that is it. The expression is what I have been trying to get. It is perfect." He went on working hastily while he talked. "There is in your eyes just that subtle sadness of the goddess, casting secret glances into the shadows to which she must return. Is it an inspiration, Miss Atkins? You must have been reading up Persephone."

"I do not need to read it," she said; "I know it."

"Of course, everyone knows it," he answered, "but few can look it as you do. In two weeks we are to return to England, and I hope to carry it with me completed."

"You go so soon?" she asked me.

"So he says, my dear," I answered. "He always carries me with him, when and where he will. He brought me here against my will, and I suppose intends to take me away in the same fashion. Of course the fried chicken and johnny-cake are getting monotonous, but you have helped to make my days so pleasant I shall be sorry to leave you."

She stooped and kissed my hand with a caressing movement, and then looked at Jack. Did she expect him also to express regret? He did not seem to notice.

Cassie came while he was still working. She brought a great bunch of purple passion flowers, and some starry jasmine, which she insisted on arranging in the girl's dark hair.

"Cassie has no sense of the fitness of things," she said to me. "The idea of Persephone crowned with jasmine."

Jack turned and looked at her.

"Your woman has good taste," he said carelessly; "you will please stand here again for a moment? I want your hand clasping the drapery—so, but perhaps you are tired."

"Am I ever tired?"

That was all she said, but I saw the negro woman look up quickly and watch the girl in a strange, questioning way. Then I remembered this was the first time Cassie had ever happened to come in when she was standing as his model. Perhaps, I thought, she does not approve. She said nothing; only asking before she left how soon her mistress would be home.

"Soon, Cassie; very soon," she answered.

"'Cause, honey," I heard her say as the girl went out on the veranda with her, "'cause yeh know them two months is all but gone."

"No need to tell me—I remember."

"I's feard things heah might larn yeh to forget. I—I spect yeh couldn't come now—right away?" There was so much earnestness in the woman's voice that it compelled my attention, half unconscious that I was listening, until they had ceased talking.

"Nonsense, Cassie; why should I? You can attend to the place a little longer. It will not be long that either of us will have it to care for."

"Tain't the place, Missee Perse, and 'tain't the work. But sence I went in thar with them flowers, somethin' made me 'member Miss Clio's fear for yo' future, an' what yer promised her."

"That will do, Cassie; you can go!" The voice was imperious, and I heard no reply, only the woman walking slowly toward the steps, and then I heard the girl's quick feet follow her, and could make out a murmur of voices in which Cassie seemed to be petting her, and trying to comfort her in some way. Then I heard the girl say:

"Good-by, Cassie. I shall never be cross again, and I will not forget."

I began to wonder in an aimless way what it all meant. The girl was all I could wish for as a companion, and I was seriously thinking of proposing that she should go to England with me. Surely, I thought, she could earn a better living there than among these uncouth people, who seemed averse to giving her any help, if I could judge by the Snodgrass family. I had never heard her mention a friend or even an acquaintance. Several times I was about to broach the subject of her leaving with me for a home, where I could insure her aid and friendship, but the girl's reticence, approaching mystery, checked me, and another incident did more.

Jack had called her in from the veranda, where she was reading to me. That was the last day he needed her for his picture. He led her where she would get the best view of it.

"I want you," he said half laughingly, but with a certain pride for his work in his voice—"I want you to take a good look at the face that is to make my fortune."

"Your fortune?"

"Well, the first marker toward it. If I ever win, that will win for me. I always felt it would if I could find the Persephone I had in mind."

"And I am it?"

"Don't speak of yourself as 'It,' he said gently; "we only speak of humanity so when death has touched the earthy part. And the life you have helped me to give to my work has nothing of the grim specter in it."

Her hand was resting on the back of a chair as they stood before the picture. He stooped and touched it with his lips, half in gratitude, half in gallantry, as he would have done had it been mine, with as little thought of what meaning such an action might have for a girl so unused to the empty gallantries of society. He has a way of doing things carelessly, which might seem to others significant.

The girl drew back and looked at him, much as she had done on the day of his impetuous entrance, when he saw her first. Then she turned and walked out to where I was sitting.

"He is done with me," she said, trying to speak lightly. "He will need me no more; the picture is finished."

"Read something to me," I said, with a queer feeling that neither of us could talk just then.

She brought a volume of Southey, and among other quaint things read that story of the dead virgin whose body an evil spirit inhabited after her own soul was gone. She finished it, and then turned suddenly to me.

"I wonder," she said, "if there are people who live on like that, after all their own soul has been drawn from them—and if so, how like animals with only instincts they would be!"

This was such a very peculiar question I could not find an answer at once, and before I could collect my ideas, voices were heard in the court below, and we both seemed to forget to continue the subject.

"Pap says he's down thar at the store now," came Mrs. Snodgrass' falsetto, "an' ef he gets wind o' this, I'll go bail thar'll be trouble. He's jest fool enough to think thar ain't no one ekal to 'er."

"Air yeh sure it's settled atween 'em?" The questioner was the monotonous Alviny.

"Wall, I reckon it is! That was all settled while her marm was living—her doin's, I s'pose. She knew no one else would evah marry 'er, an' he's been dead sot on her evah sence they was chillen. An' he won't stand no 'lusions 'bout 'er, nuther—

had several fights, they say, up thar amongst them charcoal burners about it, an' now they leave him alone."

"An' they say," broke in Hugh, "that he has been puttin' up a right smart shanty in easy reach of the balsams, with all sorts o' gim-cracks, an' a garden fenced in, an' all."

"I'd think," said Alviny, "he'd ruther live down thar in the bottom."

"He can't, an' work in the balsams; an' then the house down thar is mortgaged to its full vally; an' I reckon it'll soon be closed. They hain't the money to pay it off."

"Some way," said Hugh, "I wouldn't be much s'prised ef she didn't marry him, after all."

"Stuff!" said his mother; "she can't better herself. No white man in the State 'ud marry her but Hen Oker, even if her marm was kep' like a lady es long as he could afford it. An' some do say he married her in furren parts afore he died; but that don't noways change the fact that she was bought by his father afore the wah, jest the same es any o' the other niggahs."

"She was white as white," said the other daughter.

"So's this 'un, fer the matter o' that. But them as knows can tell the signs o' the black blood."

Then Hugh lounged out to the gate, and the women went back to their dish-washing, and I could hear no more. The sun was going down back of the hills, whose tops seemed even more

gloomy and funereal than ever. Jack had told me it was somewhere up among them that the charcoal and wood-men lived, and I always felt sorry for those isolated, unseen workers. I was thinking of them and the man's new shanty among them when I turned to speak to Persephone.

She also was looking out toward the hills, and her face had in it that which frightened me—hopelessness!—horror!—dread!—what was it?"

"Persephone!" I cried.

She turned, but looked at me without speaking.

"Persephone, what is it?" I asked half fearfully. "You seemed to be looking at some horrible thing! You frightened me."

"I am sorry," she said; "I forgot I was not alone."

"Of what were you thinking, child?"

"Of what? Oh, of many things. Did you ever become frightened through taking a look into your inner self?—No. I suppose not. Well, I did that just now, and it was not a pleasant picture."

"Child, you give me the horrors," I said; "don't talk any more. Sing something."

She went in for the guitar. The moon was just rising, round and full, and as bright almost as the sun of which the last shafts had not yet disappeared. It made the room light enough to see the picture from where I sat.

"I wonder," she said, as she came back, "if Persephone did not think, after all, that it was

worth enduring Hades for the happiness she enjoyed in her season of sunshine. I think now it would have been. If I had conceived the idea before, the face in Mr. Hilyard's Persephone would have been triumphant in having once more gained the light, instead of fearful at the thought of return to darkness.

"Then Mr. Hilyard is thankful you did not think of it," said Jack, coming out on the veranda. "My Persephone is just what I want her in expression. Sing something for me."

"For you?" she said, with the first sign of coquetry I had ever seen in her manner, and I found myself watching her fearfully as she glanced at him, showing her perfect teeth and brilliant eyes in the soft, cool light. What was it ailed the girl?—where was the anguish of a few moments before—or traces of the thoughts her few sentences had given the key to? She smiled down in Jack's face, who had stretched himself lazily beside her, as if she had never done anything but smile. Once she saw me looking at her curiously, and must have understood, for she leaned over and laid her hand on mine. It was cold.

"Your hands"—I began.

"Never mind," she said, "they will get warm—sometime."

Then she sang. I had heard her sing often, but never as she did then. I know of nothing with which to compare it. Jack listened carelessly at first. He had heard many fine, better-trained

voices, but never a more sympathetic one, or one with so much expression. Added to this, there was a magnetic power in the voice, or in the girl herself, which forbade listlessness when she sang. It overcame Jack's supineness. I could see him listening as I had never known him to listen to any woman before, his eyes almost as bright as her own. Did she notice it, too? Her cheeks were flushed. I could see her eyes were on his as she went from a pathetic slave song to one she had found in a late magazine. I had heard the same song several times before, and never remembered the words. I heard her sing it that once, and I do not think I shall ever forget them:

"When the reaper rests to bind
Summer into sheaves,
Wouldst thou ask the harvest wind
Why it loves the leaves?

Wouldst thou ask of word or tune
Why their souls agree?
Or why the ever changeful moon
Woos the inconstant sea?

Nature asks not whence or how,
Nature cares not why.
'Tis enough that thou art thou,
And that I am I."

Before she had finished I heard someone coming up the steps toward us. She must have heard it, too, and known who it was, for the flush died out of her face, though she did not falter in the song. The steps stopped beside her. With the last line her hand dropped to her side, where Jack lay. Did

he touch it? I could not see from where I sat. I know she raised it and touched it to her lips. Then she arose and turned to the man standing beside her.

"You have come, Hen," she said; "I am ready."

"I was afraid yeh might forget," said the man, evidently for some reason expecting a different reception. He was a big, heavy-looking country man. "They told me yer wouldn't keep your promise."

"They did not know," she said quietly, and I began to wonder how many different phases of character it is possible for a woman to have. "I will keep my promise, and I will go now—at once, if you want me."

"You know," that was all he said.

Jack then seemed to understand. He rose to his feet and came to me.

"What does it mean, Auntie Jeanne?" he asked.

She turned to me. "Can you remember the conversation we heard down there?" she asked. "They spoke of a girl whom but one white man would marry. I was the girl of whom they spoke. You heard the rest of the story—no need to repeat it. And I must go—go now while I am able. I thank you for the sunshine you have given me. It will help to lighten the balsam woods for the rest of my life. Good-by."

Jack sprang to her side as she went to take the man's hand.

"Persephone—wait!" he said; "Where are you going? I want you."

"You will want me no more. You have that," and she pointed through the window. Then she turned to him defiantly. "Do you know what I am?" she asked; "I am the child of a slave—ah! I thought that would change you," —as he drew back with a gesture as if to stop her. "Just now I saw what was in your eyes, and that memory will be with me always. But I knew, even in my triumph, that it could not last—the tainted blood would drown it. I remember my mother's story. That she was a wife did not save her from desertion."

Then she came over to my side.

"Do not judge me harshly," she whispered. "At first I thought you knew, and after I saw him I could not tell you. You see," and she laughed a little, "I am Persephone. I knew what the falling leaves would bring, but I longed so for the sunlight."

"Where are you going?" Jack demanded as she passed him on her way to the man, who stood as if scarcely understanding, but waiting for her.

"Going?"—and she laughed again. "I am going where the other Persephone went to. Come, Hen."

"We are going into the balsam hills," said the man, taking her hand, and they walked away in the moonlight down the steps. She did not look back once.

That was two years ago. We are back in England again, where Jack's picture has put him on the high road to fortune, and has won for him an enviable position in his profession. He is not quite the same boy as he was when we took that trip to the Carolina hills. He is a little more quiet and less careless in little things. And I don't hear his boyish laugh through the house so often now. I notice that he keeps his sketches of that summer in a portfolio by themselves, and always near him. I see him looking over them often, smoking very big cigars, and very many of them. But of his model for Persephone we have never exchanged words since that September night when we saw her last, led down the steps by the man from the balsam hills.

It is the only subject in our lives which we appear by common consent to silently avoid. It seems to be the one about which we can have nothing to say.

And I do not think the time will ever come when we shall.